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ABSTRACT

Focusing on the Exploring Transfer (ET) program, in which community college students attend summer university classes, this report describes the history of the program, reviews its main components, and discusses strategies for replicating the model. The first section reviews the origins of ET, indicating that it was first implemented in 1985 by New York's Vassar College and LaGuardia Community College (New York) but has since been expanded to include seven community colleges. This section also reviews issues and challenges related to the development of the program; discusses program changes and enrollments since 1985; and examines transfer outcomes, indicating that of the 399 students who completed the program as of 1994, 64% (n=254) have actually transferred, almost three times the national transfer average of 23%. The next section discusses efforts to replicate the program at other institutions, reviewing two successful and three unsuccessful efforts and highlighting lessons from the experience. The final section reviews the benefits and risks of establishing an ET-based program for students, faculty, and the institution and reviews essential elements for program success, including appropriate faculty, collaboration between partner institutions, leadership from the top, adequate funding, the use of faculty teams, and suitable curriculum. An appendix provides a list of donors to the program from 1985 to 1996. (Contains 47 references.) (BCY)

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Transforming Students' Lives

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by
Janet Lieberman
and
Julie Yearsley Hungar

JC 980 058

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Transforming Students' Lives

How "Exploring Transfer" Works, and Why

by
Janet Lieberman
and
Julie Yearsley Hungar

The story of the "Exploring Transfer" program, initiated from a collaboration between Vassar College and LaGuardia Community College.

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and families

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Transforming Students' Lives: How "Exploring Transfer" Works, and Why
by Janet Lieberman and Julie Yearsley Hungar

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contents

VASSAR COLLEGE

PREFACE
v

THE EXPLORING TRANSFER STORY

GENESIS: THE CALL FOR ACCESS
1

THE ODD COUPLE
9

ISSUES AND CHALLENGES
22

THE PIONEERS
29

EVOLUTION
46

OUTCOMES: TRANSFER
61

REPLICATION

REACHING OUT: SHARING THE MODEL
65

LESSONS LEARNED

TRANSFORMATION: POSITIVE RESULTS AND RISKS
85

MAKING A DIFFERENCE: ENSURING SUCCESS
103

BIBLIOGRAPHY

APPENDIX

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Preface

Despite efforts of the last twenty-five years, the ideal of equal access to higher education for all students remains unrealized. Certainly, progress has been made, but there is still far to go — especially for students of color and low socioeconomic status. A significant measure of access to baccalaureate education is the rate at which students transfer from community colleges to four-year institutions. While the nation's community colleges serve high numbers of minority and low-income students, disappointingly few of their students manage to make the leap to four-year institutions.

The Exploring Transfer program has been successfully addressing this issue since 1985. What began as a partnership between Vassar College and LaGuardia Community College (a City University of New York campus located in the borough of Queens in New York City) has expanded to include seven community colleges. The program has transformed not only the lives of its students and faculty but also its cooperating institutions. And its graduates have transferred to and graduated from four-year institutions at a rate nearly triple the national average.

Two successful replications of the Exploring Transfer program, at Bucknell University and Smith College, have produced similar results, attesting to its power. The purpose of this book, then, is to encourage other institutions to consider adapting the Exploring Transfer model to create their own partnerships in their own settings. The chapters that follow describe key elements of the model, its genesis and development, and changes in the program over time. Especially important are the lessons learned from more than twelve years of Exploring Transfer experience and analysis.

In Appreciation

Valuable contributions to this account have come from many people, especially Colton Johnson, Tom McGlinchey, Frances Fergusson, Virginia Smith, Norman Fainstein, Alison Bernstein, Steven Zwerling, Harold Wechsler, Jane Spalding, Janet Andrews, John Chaffee, Joel Diamond, Judy Kohl,

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April 1997

chapter
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Genesis: The Call for Access

Exploring Transfer is the story of an educational innovation that has worked and of the lessons it offers. The story is about educators crossing the great divide that separates the urban, open-admissions, public community college from the selective, residential, independent liberal arts college. It is about visionary funding agencies stimulating and supporting the change process. And it is about students leaping into the unknown and being rewarded with totally new expectations of themselves and their ability to succeed.

It is also about the power of collaboration between institutions with significant differences but a common goal. The original partners were Vassar College and LaGuardia Community College; other community colleges soon joined them. The mission they shared was to break down barriers keeping community college students, especially students of color, from achieving the baccalaureate degree. At the same time, they were determined to expand the pool and increase the diversity of students in four-year institutions, particularly liberal arts colleges. In doing so, the partners intended to release the untapped abilities of community college students, while exposing them to the value of liberal study. Furthermore, the program would demonstrate how a concerted, holistic effort to remove obstacles on both sides of the transfer gap would make the seemingly inaccessible not only accessible but possible.

Because Exploring Transfer has so powerfully changed the lives of students, the way faculties teach, and the relationships between two- and four-year colleges, the program's lessons bear repeating. They offer information that other institutions and funding groups interested in improving access to higher education should find both encouraging and helpful.

Success Story

The program, originally called the "Vassar Summer Program for Community College Students," is essentially a mini-college experience. A group of selected community college students participates in an intensive residential summer session on the Vassar campus. They earn Vassar credit

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Arlene Alvarado (ET '86, Vassar '89), who describes herself as "a low-income daughter of Cuban immigrants," transferred from LaGuardia to Vassar after Exploring Transfer. At Vassar, she designed her own major, "Animal Behavior and Environmental Modification." After graduating in 1989, she was awarded a four-year fellowship to the doctoral program at the University of California at Davis.

While at Davis, Alvarado was invited to spend six months in Zimbabwe running an experimental project on the impala. She calls the experience a "lifelong dream come true." She adds, "While I was frightened at the idea of going to a strange and unfamiliar land, I remembered one of the many invaluable lessons from ... ET — follow your dreams and never let fear be the reason for missing out on a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity."

for two rigorous courses, each team-taught by one faculty member from Vassar and another from a community college. After the summer experience, most of the program's students return to their original colleges to complete their two-year degrees and then transfer to baccalaureate institutions.

Exploring Transfer, or ET, as it is familiarly known, grew out of conversations and planning begun in 1983 by innovative educators from Vassar College and LaGuardia Community College who were looking for solutions to a problem that remains unsolved today: the low numbers of community college students, particularly students of color, achieving the baccalaureate degree. Initial conversations led to a partnership between the two institutions. The partners then added students from four more community colleges — Dutchess, Rockland, Sullivan County, and Ulster County, all from upstate New York — to launch the first summer session in 1985. Converging from different perspectives, the collaborators developed a common purpose: to challenge students who had academic potential by exposing them to liberal study in a program that enabled them to meet the challenge and expand their horizons.

Today, Exploring Transfer is an established program involving seven community colleges and Vassar. Its results have been spectacular. ET graduates have gone on in record numbers to earn bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees. Many are launched on promising careers. Regardless of the path they have taken, most report that the experience changed their lives by giving them an entirely new sense of their own abilities and the options open to them.

Most ET students come from low-income families, and usually they are the first in their families to go to college. Nearly two-thirds are from ethnic minorities. Thousands of their counterparts can be found in community colleges across the country — a national talent pool that remains relatively unrecognized and untapped.

ET faculty and their institutions, too, have been indelibly marked. Working with colleagues from another sector and teaching a group of highly motivated students give faculty renewed enthusiasm for and fresh insight into the teaching-learning process. The collaborating institutions gain better-prepared students and rejuvenated faculty. Everyone involved acquires new understanding and respect for community college students and for the partner institutions.

Vassar science classroom: ET student and faculty member.

The success of the first few years of Exploring Transfer led to a replication project funded by a grant to Vassar from the Ford Foundation, with additional funding from the AT&T Foundation, Transamerica, and Chase Manhattan Bank. Vassar invited the Association of American Colleges and Universities to be a partner in the replication project. Outcomes of the replications underscore the power of the model, as well as reinforcing the principles critical for its success. Of five replications initially funded, two are still going strong: at Bucknell University and Smith College. They demonstrate both the virtues of the model and its portability.

Understanding the model's key components, the likely obstacles and pitfalls, and the sources of its strength provides a guide for adapting it to other educational settings. Although some characteristics are particular to the ET partnership, many of its basic principles are applicable to a wide range of higher education institutions. This adaptability and the model's transforming power argue for its broad adoption.

The Context

In the years since ET's launch in 1985, the need for such a program has not diminished. If anything, it has increased, as federal support for students in higher education declines along with commitment to access for the underserved.

In the early 1980s, the *zeitgeist* in higher education reflected ambivalence toward community colleges. On the one hand, the relatively new sector was the fastest-growing segment of American higher education, enrolling almost 40 percent of all college students. Of the 1,219 community colleges, 1,064 were under public control.

The advent in the 1970s of open admissions policies had flooded urban

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community colleges with a new kind of student. Uniquely American, the sector specialized in lower-division academic courses and career-oriented programs, providing access to economic advancement for students historically underserved by baccalaureate institutions, including minorities and women. The average community college student was female, older, poorer financially, and less prepared academically than the "traditional" college student. Many needed flexible pathways and strong academic support to compensate for shortcomings in their preparation for college-level work.

At the same time, though, critics charged that the community colleges were failing in their mission to provide opportunity for the underserved. Authors such as F.L. Pincus (1974) and Steven Zwerling (1976) accused these so-called "people's colleges" of serving the "cooling-out" function Burton Clark (1960) had identified years earlier. They saw the community colleges as actually reinforcing the status quo, tracking minority and poor students into training for low-end jobs rather than into transfer to four-year institutions.

Perceptions aside, the data were also equivocal. Two-year schools founded in the 1970s with a mandate to serve the underprepared had responded with innovative remediation, flexible scheduling, and student-centered curricula. Yet by the early 1980s, fewer than 14 percent of community college students were transferring to four-year institutions (Cohen and Brawer 1987). Of these students, about 5 percent graduated in two years with associate's degrees and transferred immediately; another 8 to 9 percent transferred before completing their associate's degrees.

The low transfer rate had many root causes. One was the decreasing emphasis on transfer in community colleges, as legislators, trustees, and institutions jumped on the vocational training bandwagon. While college transfer enrollments and academic course offerings had dominated most community college catalogs well into the 1960s, by the 1980s occupational programs had approached parity. Preparing people for jobs in the local economy had strong political and community appeal; community colleges, looking for state and local funding, responded with new and expanded vocational offerings.

An explicit part of the vocational faculty's role was to help graduates find work in their fields. Teachers nurtured ties with area industries, creating a pipeline to jobs and a follow-up system that kept tabs on changes in the job market. By contrast, students intending to pursue an academic degree might be offered information about transfer requirements, but it was often inaccurate or out-of-date. Mostly they were left on their own.

Another deterrent to transfer was the mismatch between the demands of

the transfer process and the character of the typical community college student. College transfer procedures assumed that students could mobilize their own resources to fill out applications, secure transcripts, arrange interviews, write essays, apply for financial aid. But first-generation college students had trouble negotiating the system. They were immobilized by inexperience and discouraged by the bureaucracy they encountered in their home college and in the receiving institution.

A fundamental internal obstacle for these students was low self-esteem. Many had never been considered — nor considered themselves — "college material." They lacked academic role models in their families and communities. As a result, they did not have the confidence to envision themselves succeeding in senior institutions.

Those who did plan for four-year degrees customarily headed for publicly funded universities, usually close to home. They saw residential liberal arts colleges as places that exclusively served members of a leisured class. The perception was that such colleges enrolled only students who had prepared for college in the hothouse of the private prep school and could afford to study subjects like the humanities, arts, and sciences. The idea was foreign territory to the typical community college student — who attended college after some years in the work world, whose plan was to study for no more than two years, whose goal usually was to get a better job. For such students, neither their capacity for study of the liberal arts nor the value of such study figured in their aspirations.

Another obvious obstacle was money. Most community college students also worked to support themselves while attending school. They were in no financial position to pay the higher tuitions charged by public

impact

Laurel Herdman (ET '91, Vassar '95) is a single parent who found after working for twenty years that without a college degree her job was a dead end. Seventeen years after starting at Ulster County Community College, she went back into the college's human services program to become a social worker. The professor of her honors literature course suggested she apply to ET.

This was a big step. She says, "The liberal arts are considered leisurely, wasteful in my community. I'm grateful to liberal arts learning — I can look beyond black/white, on/off, and I can see the gray areas." Her two-year-old son stayed with his father during the summer session, so ET was like "a vacation from diapers and bottles. It was exciting to have time to devote to study, to see what I could do."

After completing her Ulster degree, Herdman went on to graduate from Vassar in anthropology. Discovering that her first job, as a social worker for adolescents, did not pay enough to support her and her son, she started her own business, called "Career Launcher," assisting clients in preparing for satisfying jobs. In 1995, she became director of the Ulster County Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner program, part of the district attorney's office.

Herdman's goal is to help those who are disadvantaged, and her education is enabling her to reach that goal. She says, "ET and Vassar gave me not only the degree I needed but also an environment to tie my talents, visions, and desires together to accomplish what I really want to do."

four-year institutions, much less those at independent colleges; nor could they quit work to attend full-time and during the day, as most of those colleges required. The concept of winning a scholarship was equally alien.

Finally, there was the matter of family obligations and the trauma of leaving their neighborhoods, especially to transfer to a distant, suburban or even rural campus. Many urban community college students had lived all their lives within the city limits; marriage, children, and older relatives tied them to their homes. It was hard to envision giving up the support of friends and the comfort of the familiar.

The attitudes of baccalaureate institutions toward community colleges and their students presented another set of obstacles to transfer. In the eighty-some years since the original community colleges were established to provide lower-division undergraduate education, the connection between the sectors had steadily diminished. Although the two often drew from the same tax base, public two- and four-year institutions pursued increasingly different missions and found little common ground. The independent colleges pursued yet a third mission and served a different clientele.

Senior college and university faculty generally viewed community college faculty as offering a second-class product and saw little need to understand or communicate with their lower-division counterparts. For their part, community college faculty perceived universities as distant and impersonal, not student-oriented. As a result, the two groups had minimal contact, except around transferability of courses, and even that tended to be ad hoc. Practices at baccalaureate institutions in giving credit for community college courses and degrees varied widely, even between campuses within the same state system. Formal articulation agreements, where they existed, did not solve the problem. University departments changed requirements and equivalencies without regard to the effect on community college students preparing to transfer. In many liberal arts colleges, the prescribed course of lower-division study virtually precluded transfer at the junior level.

Implicit in this disjuncture was disdain at the senior colleges for the quality of the students who attended two-year schools. The idea of open admissions, which gave many poorly prepared students entry through the "open door," adversely stereotyped the community college student. So, too, did the emphasis in community colleges on so-called "terminal" degrees leading to entry-level jobs. The truth was that many capable students began their educations in two-year colleges, sometimes in occupational programs. But such students did not fit the stereotype.

Consequently, when community college students did transfer, many of their credits were rejected or they received only elective credit not applicable toward graduation requirements. Once enrolled at large public universities — the most common transfer route — many transfer students felt like second-class citizens. Such treatment, plus the leap from a student-centered environment of small classes and a faculty focused on teaching, often resulted in the phenomenon known as "transfer shock," characterized by low grades in the first term after transfer. After the first quarter, however, transfer students usually performed about as well as their peers. But not all were strong enough to survive the initial shock.

Independent four-year colleges presented their own set of difficulties. Although they often were even more student-centered than community colleges, barriers of higher academic standards, social class, and high cost were great enough to appear insurmountable to most community college students.

By the time of Exploring Transfer's origin, however, the environment was beginning to change. Demographics in the 1980s aroused new concerns and renewed interest in transfer students. For the first time in many years, four-year enrollments were declining. Educators feared an increasingly separatist higher education system. Birth rates among minority groups were substantially higher than that of whites, but minority students were underrepresented in the college population. African Americans made up 12 percent of 18-to-24-year-olds but only 9.2 percent of college students; for Hispanics, it was 7.1 percent compared with 4.4 percent. Of those 18-to-24-year-olds attending college, most were enrolled in urban community colleges. Some educators began to see in these demographics an untapped pool of applicants for four-year colleges and universities.

Another trend, subtle but influential, surfaced in the 1980s. Along with concern about low numbers of community college transfers, reformers

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Deirdre Anderson (ET '92, Vassar '96) worked full-time while studying communications at CUNY's Borough of Manhattan Community College at night. Going to ET seemed to her like an impossible sacrifice, taking five weeks off without pay, juggling all the changes in her life. Once she took the step, she found how valuable it was to have nothing to do but apply herself to her studies.

Returning to the BMCC for her associate of arts degree, in her first semester she felt like "a rubber band stretched; [ET] gave me the capacity to do more." Anderson transferred to Vassar and earned a degree in Renaissance history. Back in her old apartment in Manhattan, a move she found challenging after two years at Vassar, she went to work at the Museum of Television and Radio.

She calls ET "a dynamic, intellectually stimulating experience which was different from other class environments, including Vassar." She now returns to the BMCC to tell students that "for working-class people, education is not only for getting a job but also for understanding the world: racism, classism, culturalism, and other fundamental issues that affect our daily lives."

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decried the lack of connection between high schools and colleges. Ernest Boyer and the Carnegie Commission emphasized the need for a "seamless web of continuity in education" (1983). According to Wilbur (1988), the school reform movement generated collaboration between high schools and community colleges. Other authorities attributed the new emphasis on high school/college connections to the need for solving anticipated college enrollment shortfalls.

High school/college collaborations often limited themselves to creating innovative curricula, but some were more ambitious. Middle College, a public high school housed at LaGuardia Community College (and designed by Janet Lieberman), proved that such a partnership could reduce the high school drop-out rate and prepare students for college, thus benefitting both sectors. Numerous replications of the Middle College model across the country bore out the soundness of its basic tenets: among them, challenging students academically, holding them to high expectations, and providing strong support. Why wouldn't these principles prove equally applicable to community college students?

These confluent conditions — projected declines in college enrollments, underrepresentation of minorities in higher education, low rates of transfer from community college, and the impetus for partnerships from school reform — all pointed in one direction for some thoughtful educators. They saw increasing the transfer rate of community college students, especially minorities, as a promising solution. The question was how to make it happen.

chapter
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The Odd Couple

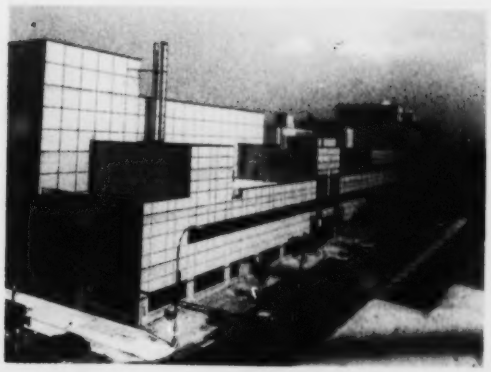
It would be hard to find a more unlikely pair of collaborators than Vassar College and LaGuardia Community College. At polar extremes in the higher education continuum, the two institutions differ in size, mission, pedagogy, standards, cost. Their students differ markedly in their academic preparation and social position and in their educational goals.

In fact, it was precisely this diversity that initially attracted the partners. Their coming together demonstrates one of the prime lessons learned from the Exploring Transfer program: When institutions bring imagination, integrity, and the will to achieve a common goal to a partnership, they can reach their goal. Other keys to the success of the Vassar/LaGuardia relationship are a shared focus on student needs, combined with flexibility and empathy for the partner institution. Both institutions emphasize the teaching function while encouraging faculty scholarship. Their climates support innovation. Each is a respected exemplar of the best of its institutional type.

What brought these two institutions together from opposite ends of the higher education spectrum was recognition by visionaries in both colleges that a mine of student academic talent was not reaching its highest potential. Further, by helping those students fulfill their potential, the institutions would meet their own interests as well.

The Commuter College: LaGuardia

LaGuardia Community College opened in 1971, the last in a series of community colleges created by the City University of New York in response to the call for open admissions. Located in western Queens, LaGuardia views serving minority students as a cornerstone of its mission. Graduates earn associate of arts, associate of science, or associate of applied science degrees, requiring the equivalent of two years of postsecondary coursework. Sixty percent of its students require public assistance and financial aid to attend school. Low-income students are eligible for tuition refunds from the New York State Tuition Assistance Program. In 1983, the year the



LaGuardia Community College, Queens, New York City

Exploring Transfer idea was born, tuition and fees totaled $1,156 for the academic year.

Since its early years, LaGuardia Community College has been noted as a leader in the cooperative education movement. All degree programs require students to earn nine college credits through work related to their career choices. Most students go to LaGuardia to gain credentials for employment, and many hold jobs while attending school. Many have serious remedial needs in reading, writing, and/or mathematics. In 1983, only about 5 percent of students were enrolled in a liberal arts major.

By 1983, the college was riding high. Twelve years of experience with an open admissions population had led to the creation of successful programs in remediation and English-as-a-second-language. The full spectrum of ethnic diversity was represented in the college's administration and faculty; all were committed to the principles of access and equity. Within this multiethnic environment resided a high degree of respect among students and faculty, and the college culture fostered a sense of cohesion and dedication.

Hired largely at the opening of the college in 1971, the faculty included many teachers active in the civil rights movements of the 1960s. They reflected formative experiences in antipoverty programs and found satisfaction in disseminating their values through teaching and community activity. They were intent on implementing social reform and interested in improving the conditions of the minority and the underserved. The climate of experimentation and outreach fed new ideas and programs. Throughout the institution, the dedication to affirmative action was strong. As a consequence, LaGuardia had attracted first-class minority scholars and had developed a vibrant faculty community that was both intellectual and multicultural.

During those first twelve years, the college had seen its student population not only grow but change. In 1971, LaGuardia had enrolled 450 students, drawing chiefly from the white, Catholic, girls' school in the neighborhood. By 1983, enrollment was more than 7,000, of whom 80 percent were students of color. As more Hispanic and African-American women moved into the area, they enrolled in the college, eager to become upwardly mobile. Mostly working mothers, these women wanted to finish in two years and find decent "white-collar" jobs.

Before Exploring Transfer, LaGuardia's faculty and administrators

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were aware of the importance of the bachelor's degree for success, but transfer was not their highest priority. They dedicated few resources to promoting it. One counselor had primary responsibility for transfer, and a few faculty recruited students for their own alma maters. Otherwise, students interested in a bachelor's degree were largely on their own.

At the system level, the City University of New York had an ostensible commitment to transferring students from its two-year colleges to its four-year colleges. There were intrainstitutional articulation agreements, but the provisions were perfunctory and the process frustrating. Advisors at the receiving colleges had to match descriptions of LaGuardia courses and content with their own institutional catalogues in a course-by-course articulation to guarantee credit. Often, in spite of written guarantees, the situation would deteriorate and a LaGuardia counselor would have to advocate on behalf of the student.

Everyone knew that the transition could be smoother. Within LaGuardia itself there existed an example of cross-sector collaboration in the creation of the Middle College, a successful high school/college partnership in which students at risk of dropping out of high school could apply to complete their educations on the LaGuardia campus. Middle College and LaGuardia treated the students as adults and challenged them intellectually, but also provided strong academic support. As a result, an extraordinary 80 percent completed high school, and 75 percent of the senior class went on to college. With the Middle College, LaGuardia faculty and administrators had firsthand experience that cross-level partnerships could work. They recognized that such model programs were both generative and inspirational.

Because many LaGuardia faculty were members of minority groups or had been active in the civil rights movement, they also knew that LaGuardia's predominantly minority and low-income students deserved more opportunity. Most faculty also had experience in the work world.

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When Dolores Colon (ET '88, Yale '91) came to LaGuardia at age 34, she attended part-time while receiving public assistance and raising two children as a single mother. Her aspirations were to transfer to a unit of City University and acquire first a degree and next a good job.

Then came her experience at Vassar. Colon says, "They taught me I can go to school anywhere. I thought I would be limited to CUNY, but I learned there are schools out there that are eager to have me." After LaGuardia, she transferred to Yale University, taking her two children with her to New Haven.

Graduating with a bachelor's degree in English, she went to work in Yale's library system and was eventually promoted to a post with the Beinecke Library. Her son is now a Yale undergraduate. Colon is also vice president of the Yale clerical and technical staff union and an active delegate to the New Haven Central Labor Council.

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They knew both personally and statistically that the bachelor's degree was becoming a necessary qualification for success in that world. Furthermore, the faculty recognized that many students would be capable of greater academic mastery and aspirations if the mystery and trauma of the transfer process could be reduced.

This knowledge motivated faculty to try raising the educational sights of LaGuardia's most capable students. The question was how to do it in a culture that saw "honors" courses as leading to tracking and inequity, which were unacceptable to both LaGuardia faculty and administrators. Eager to find the right balance between the open door and high academic challenge, the college was poised for change.

The Residential College: Vassar

To embrace any program that spans the gap between two-year and four-year institutions requires an unusual degree of self-examination and openness to improvement. For some time, many baccalaureate institutions had been worried about their low minority student enrollments. Among these was Vassar, one of the original "Seven Sisters," a prominent and highly respected women's college that became coeducational in 1969.

Founded in 1861, Vassar is a residential college situated on 1,000 acres on the outskirts of Poughkeepsie in rural, upstate New York. Poughkeepsie is the last stop on Metro North's Hudson Line; from Grand Central Station, the train trip takes two hours. The campus has a calm, intellectual aura, with handsome buildings and broad lawns: a far cry from the urban hustle and bustle of New York City's Queens. Vassar offers intellectually capable students a four-year liberal arts program of rigorous academic standards. A high proportion of its undergraduates are preparing for graduate or professional school. Most are on campus full-time and have few responsibilities other than learning.

In 1983, enrollment was 2,250. Average class size was eleven students. Tuition for the academic year was $8,200, seven times that of LaGuardia; room and full board cost another $3,440.

Both the cost and the culture of Vassar would have seemed formidable obstacles to poor students from the city if they had known such a place existed. But most did not. Had they heard of Vassar, they would likely have been surprised to know that in 1983 some 40 percent of its students needed and received financial aid. Not all Vassar students were wealthy, but those who weren't knew how to get scholarships. But this kind of infor-

mation did not customarily trickle down to students at community colleges like LaGuardia.

During its first century, Vassar earned a reputation for developing women as socially conscious leaders. The college opened its doors in 1861 with a curriculum, faculty, and facilities that matched those of the era's prominent men's colleges, Yale, Harvard, and the like. Vassar's dean of the college, Colton Johnson, notes that it was the first women's college to do so, at a time when few women were being prepared for college-level studies. Until the 1890s, the college offered a preparatory program to compensate for its students' poor preparation. Completing a bachelor's degree might take a Vassar student as long as six or seven years, depending on how much time she needed to reach college-level proficiency.

Vassar's emphasis on social responsibility reflects the intentions of the founder, Matthew Vassar, says current president Frances Fergusson. From the beginning, he intended that the college should not be limited to the very rich. For students who could not afford its cost, he endowed $50,000 for scholarships (a significant amount in the 1860s). The spirit and the practice of this tradition have continued, and today Vassar provides some form of financial aid to 54 percent of its students.

From its beginning, then, Vassar has combined commitment to high intellectual standards with recognition of the realities of the world students live in. Johnson points out that since the 1930s and 1940s, the college's literature and drama teachers have expected students to draw on their life experiences in their writing. For at least sixty years, the college has given credit to students who undertake fieldwork as part of their degrees, combining academic and experiential learning. The Vassar ethos encourages taking risks and supports innovation.

Vassar faculty members reflect the college's reputation for academic excellence. They are scholars with strong backgrounds in their disciplines, but they are also deeply committed to teaching and open to change that will help students learn. Multidisciplinary courses and programs exist alongside the traditional liberal arts offerings. Team-teaching brings faculty together within departments. Thus, while grounded in scholarly tradition, faculty are willing to experiment with ways to enhance student learning.

Degree requirements allow for courses of different duration, expanding course options for students. Students also can take up to one-fourth of their work as "ungraded," which encourages fieldwork and independent study. These options are akin to LaGuardia's policy of giving credit for

career-related work.

As an institution that takes social responsibility seriously, Vassar has been in the vanguard on the issue of minority access. In the 1960s, Vassar's trustees called for increasing the social and ethnic diversity of the college's faculty and students. But the task was not a simple matter of opening its doors. From the earliest efforts to increase student diversity, competition among higher education institutions for minority students who earned high scores on college entrance tests had been intense. Once selective independent colleges became concerned about how few students of color they enrolled, the competition increased. As Colton Johnson notes, often the schools — scholarship funds in hand — found themselves all pursuing the same small group of star students.

The practice made it difficult for any one institution to make a significant impact on its minority enrollment. It also opened the country's most prestigious colleges to new charges. Critics accused them of luring the cream of the minority crop away from public colleges and universities and from those often-underfunded institutions that dedicated themselves to educating African Americans, Hispanics, or Native Americans. Another criticism was that elite colleges, while claiming to address the problem of minority access, in fact were helping only those minority students who least needed help.

Since the 1960s, then, Vassar had competed with other selective liberal arts colleges for this relatively small pool of highly qualified minority applicants. During the 1970s and 1980s, the college initiated special programs to increase minority student enrollment. The college's ten-year reports showed minority enrollment of 13 percent in 1976 and 15.5 percent in 1986.

In 1983, Vassar's president was Virginia Smith, who until 1977 had been founding director of the federal Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE). While at FIPSE, Smith had seen that the transfer process created critical roadblocks for community college students. She believed that valuable human resources were wasted because many such students were unable to overcome these obstacles and complete a baccalaureate degree.

As a result of her FIPSE experience, Smith was motivated not only to attack the problem of attracting community college students to Vassar but also to improve access to baccalaureate study in general. She was interested in demographics and recognized the significant shift on the horizon. Increasingly, people of college age would be members of ethnic minorities,

and those who entered higher education usually would begin at the community college level.

Smith spent several sessions with the Vassar Board of Trustees reviewing the status of diversity and the demographic projections for the college. She and the trustees were committed to continuing the diversity efforts begun two decades earlier, and she wanted to alert them to forecasts of slow growth and even decline in the pool from which Vassar normally drew the bulk of its students.

With support from the trustees, Smith looked to link with other institutions serving her target population of minority students. She arranged with Donna Shalala, then at CUNY's Hunter College, to invite individual Hunter students to spend a term at Vassar. But it became clear that working with one student at a time would not have the systemic impact Smith sought. And the Hunter arrangement did nothing to address the point of greatest difficulty for transfer students — the move from two-year to four-year institution — since Hunter itself was a four-year school. Smith was still looking for the right collaborator: a community college with a good reputation, located in the region, and preferably one where she already had a contact.

Foundation as Catalyst

A number of funding agencies have been leaders in conceptualizing and fostering change in higher education. Among them is the Ford Foundation, which for many years has addressed minority education issues. By the early 1980s, Ford's program officers had recognized the significance of community college transfer as an access point to the baccalaureate for minority students.

Acting on this thesis, in July 1983 the Ford Foundation launched a major grant program designed to increase the number of community college students completing the baccalaureate degree by identifying institutional factors that inhibited and facilitated transfer. Grants would be based on a set of premises articulated by Alison Bernstein, then a Ford program officer in its Division of Education and Culture. (Bernstein was a Vassar graduate and had been a program officer at FIPSE under Virginia Smith. She is now vice president of the Ford Foundation's Division of Education, Arts, Culture, Media, and Religion.)

Bernstein had spent several formative career years at CUNY's Staten Island Community College (now College of Staten Island). There she had discovered not only good teachers but good students. But because of lim-

ited opportunity and low expectations, few of its promising students had been going on to four-year schools. One young administrator there, Steven Zwerling, had started a project to make connections for Staten Island students with private liberal arts colleges and major research universities. Over its five-year life, Zwerling's project served more than 300 students. Ninety percent of them transferred successfully, most with nearly full scholarships and virtually all to top-notch colleges and universities.

Bernstein had not forgotten those success stories. She knew that the way to reach significant numbers of minority students was through urban community colleges. Zwerling's work had convinced her that reducing barriers to transfer would increase the attainment of the baccalaureate degree among such students. The result was the Ford Foundation's Urban Community College Transfer Opportunities Program (TOP).

The purpose of TOP, according to Bernstein, was to challenge colleges to "rethink the opportunity structure," to reframe the relationship between community colleges and the rest of higher education. The program offered funds to help two-year colleges identify the inhibiting and facilitating factors, then eliminate as many barriers to transfer as possible and provide support systems to overcome the rest. The desired outcome would be to demonstrate that community college students could transfer successfully to senior institutions. The project targeted institutions with large pools of minority students. The hope was that foundation backing would spur colleges to recognize that transfer was a major area calling for innovative solutions.

To launch TOP, the Ford Foundation invited seventy-one community colleges in fifty-eight cities to apply for twenty-five planning grants of $25,000 each. To make the invitation list, the college had to be under public control; it had to be comprehensive, offering both college transfer and vocational programs, and to have a policy of open admissions; and at least one-third of its total enrollment had to be low-income or minority students. At the end of the two-year planning period, Ford would award $250,000 each to the six colleges judged to have the best plans.

Collaboration

LaGuardia was one of the seventy-one invitees for a TOP planning grant. The timing and tone of the invitation were fortuitous: an opportunity to pursue solutions to the transfer dilemma and to be part of a prestigious exploratory program. Governance and planning at LaGuardia had

always reflected both centralization and decentralization. The faculty were always moving in new directions, but the president's agenda took priority. In the insightful challenge of the invitation, LaGuardia's administration and faculty recognized a common aim. President Joseph Shenker saw the Ford project as a means to enhance the college's reputation and opportunities for students. The faculty members were energized by the prospect of improved futures for minority students and the challenge of new ideas supported by foundation backing.

Shenker appointed an administrator, Sheila Gordon, to write LaGuardia's planning grant proposal; they agreed that Janet Lieberman was the person to help in the design. Author of LaGuardia's Middle College plan, Lieberman also had special experience with two- and four-year transfer within the CUNY system. She had attended Vassar and graduated from Barnard College, so she was familiar with liberal arts colleges. Before coming to LaGuardia, she had been on the faculty of Hunter College, teaching in higher education and analyzing basic skills preparation. Her formal training was in educational psychology and her special interest was cognitive development. Since coming to LaGuardia in 1971, she had helped hire faculty and plan the college curriculum, particularly in basic skills.

Lieberman was familiar with the evidence (cited by Astin 1985) that many underprepared students were fully capable of succeeding at the baccalaureate level given the right institutional climate. Her LaGuardia experience showed that barriers to transfer were not entirely academic but also personal and cultural. From the literature of the period and LaGuardia's history with experiential education, she knew that direct experience changes attitudes. With this knowledge, Lieberman began to formulate the concept of a transitional experience for two-year college students that would simulate life at a four-year college. She believed that by giving them the experience of succeeding in a challenging academic setting, students could gain the confidence to envision themselves going on to upper-division study.

LaGuardia's planning proposal was one of the twenty-five accepted for funding by the Ford Foundation.

Knowing that faculty were the key to any genuine educational change, Lieberman convened a committee of six faculty and asked them to participate over the two-year planning period in designing a project that would meet Ford's goals and earn LaGuardia a full implementation grant of $250,000. Faculty participation and representation were crucial for LaGuardia to accept the project and for it to succeed.

As its first task, the faculty group investigated successful and unsuccessful transfer programs elsewhere, particularly joint efforts between two- and four-year colleges. Their research revealed some collaborations inside the large, public university systems of California and New York, but they were marginal and had no discernable impact. While formal articulation agreements, such as those inside CUNY, were superficially honored, students' credits for individual courses and programs were constantly challenged.

Transfer to independent colleges presented the same obstacles, plus some new ones, including high costs, difficult application and transfer rules, and a host of cultural barriers. A number of liberal arts colleges accepted transfer students only in rare circumstances, and great differences existed in course requirements and degree pathways.

Public or independent, the receiving institutions placed the full responsibility for negotiating the transfer system on the students. Few of their faculty had even visited a community college. But even community college faculty gave potential transfer students only minimal attention. Advisors rarely inquired — even of a promising student — "Do you have any plans to get a bachelor's degree?"

After looking at these realities, the LaGuardia faculty could clearly envision the needed reforms. Their goal was simply expressed: to increase the pool of LaGuardia students — particularly students of color — who would transfer to four-year colleges and succeed.

Establishing an on-campus transfer center to inform students about four-year colleges was the first innovation. A counselor was assigned to staff the center and stocked it with college and university catalogues and videotapes. Second, the call went out to enlist all of LaGuardia's faculty in encouraging students to plan for transfer. Minority faculty were quick to pick up advising and referring students to their own alma maters. Small ad hoc groups promoting individual four-year institutions sprang up. Other activities included student visits to four-year colleges and "college fairs" in which four-year-college personnel visited LaGuardia.

But LaGuardia's faculty soon saw that reducing students' uncertainty and fear of transfer required more reassurance than they could give. Working solely from the community college side of the fence was insufficient: Students needed personal experience of success. The faculty committee was considering ways to accomplish this when the opportunity for the Vassar partnership arose.

Meanwhile at Vassar, President Smith, still looking for possible com-

munity college connections, read a newspaper article about the recipients of Ford's Transfer Opportunities Program planning grants. She knew that LaGuardia had a large minority population and she knew its reputation for effective innovation. She also knew Janet Lieberman, who years earlier had received a FIPSE grant for the Middle College project. In other words, LaGuardia fit Smith's criteria, and she saw the potential for a successful joint venture that would serve both institutions.

In November of 1983, Smith contacted Lieberman. "How would you like to partner with Vassar in the Transfer Opportunities Program?" she asked. Lieberman was surprised but intrigued by the creative potential of this "odd couple" and agreed to explore the possibilities. The connection offered another, albeit unconventional, link to transfer for LaGuardia students. Believing in the power of liberal learning, Lieberman told President Shenker she thought the connection worth pursuing; he gave his approval.

To make the link from the Vassar side, Virginia Smith selected Colton Johnson, then dean of studies, a somewhat unusual position requiring an understanding of both students and academics. Johnson worked closely with students on their coursework and knew the rigorous demands of study at Vassar. A Ph.D. from Northwestern University, he had joined the Vassar English department in 1965. His academic standing as professor of English and an editor of the work of W.B. Yeats gave him insight on and credibility with faculty as well. Furthermore, Johnson had the academic insight to initiate curriculum innovations. This would be a major asset later, when the collaboration blossomed into the full-fledged partnership called the "Vassar Summer Program for Community College Students."

Johnson, too, was committed to increasing diversity at Vassar, and for some time he had been looking for ways to attract more community college transfers. Struck by how few community college students transferred to Vassar, he also knew that those who did performed well in the college's rigorous program. In the late 1970s, he had contacted nearby Dutchess Community College, seeking closer ties between Vassar and its neighbors. But despite a cordial exchange, neither joint efforts nor increased student transfer had developed.

Connecting now with LaGuardia offered a chance to address both of Johnson's interests. Eighty percent of LaGuardia's students were members of ethnic minorities. Exploring ways to smooth the transfer path from Queens to Poughkeepsie might bring to Vassar a new cadre of students of color possessing maturity and academic experience. At the same time, the

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Michael Rambadt (ET '92, Vassar '95) worked in a hair salon and commuted to classes at Dutchess Community College. He was taking liberal arts courses with the goal of becoming a teacher. Judy Kohl, a faculty veteran of Exploring Transfer, encouraged — perhaps pushed — him to apply for the summer program at nearby Vassar.

Having learned to speak out at ET, he returned to Dutchess looking for new challenges. He became involved in campus activities and formed the college's first gay and lesbian organization. Then he transferred to Vassar and was an ET peer counselor for three summers.

After graduating with thesis honors, Rambadt went to work managing two local newspapers and then went back to work at Vassar, where he soon became assistant to the director of the computer center. His next steps are a master's degree in eighteenth-century English literature at SUNY New Paltz and then a Ph.D. program at New York University.

LaGuardia collaboration might identify overtures that would work for students from other community colleges, from local colleges as well as those from the city.

The question was: What would it take to draw LaGuardia's transfer students to Vassar? Clearly, more than the conventional admissions brochure. Johnson and Lieberman agreed that giving students a taste of the Vassar experience might be the answer. Johnson pointed out that any effort of this kind must begin with support and involvement from respected members of the Vassar faculty. And a meeting of faculty from the two institutions was arranged.

On January 6, 1984, Colton Johnson and eight senior faculty from Vassar made the two-hour trip to Queens for the "Vassar College/ LaGuardia Community College Conference." At LaGuardia, they met with a group that included the original six faculty committee members, plus three LaGuardia administrators. The Vassar faculty, like their LaGuardia counterparts, were volunteers responding to the invitation to explore ways of promoting successful transfer for community college students. The conference's purpose was to discover how the two faculties might work together to create a bridge for transfer from LaGuardia to Vassar.

After greetings from LaGuardia's President Shenker, the two-year faculty described LaGuardia's students and their problems — academic, economic, and personal. The Vassar group responded that they had grown up in similar circumstances or had taught in urban settings, and so were no strangers to such problems. A description of LaGuardia's cooperative education program elicited comparisons to Vassar's field experience option and the possibility of transfer credit for co-op.

With those hurdles passed, the faculty began to explore more specific ways to help LaGuardia's students understand and perhaps move into the world of the four-year residential college. From their brainstorming, the idea evolved of a summer institute that would pair teachers from Vassar and LaGuardia. The underlying motif was that a successful experience would give

students confidence and raise their aspirations. According to the minutes of the meeting, "The idea generated great interest among all faculty members." Faculty began exploring possible courses for such an institute, and the meeting ended "with much good feeling and specific plans to reconvene."

The collaboration generated in that first faculty meeting took on a life of its own. With full support from both presidents, Johnson and Lieberman nurtured the collaboration and the faculty enthusiasm for the burgeoning project. Led by these two innovative educators, with involvement from dedicated faculty and later from additional community college partners, the project ultimately became the unique and powerful Exploring Transfer model of educational change.

The collaboration was based on a set of mutual goals and advantages: Vassar hoped to expand and diversify its student pool and to broaden educational horizons for all of its faculty and students. LaGuardia hoped to increase the opportunities available to its more able students and to provide its faculty with new challenges and sources of academic stimulation.

Formation of the partnership underscores the crucial role leaders play in promoting change. Effective leaders are well-informed about the broader educational world and the impact of national trends. They are willing to take risks and support innovation based on that knowledge. They are prepared to make and keep long-term commitments. They pass the reins for implementation to creative change agents and support those agents' creativity. These leadership characteristics exemplified by Shenker and Smith were key to the success of Exploring Transfer.

The rest of the story is about the major roles played by faculty, students, and administrators. Exploring Transfer is ultimately the creation of those who developed and continue to sustain the program, and above all those who participate in it directly — teaching, learning, and changing lives.

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3

Issues and Challenges

A Foundation Built on Common Ground

Besides the obvious advantages to each institution, what brought LaGuardia Community College and Vassar College together was their many underlying similarities. Both are fundamentally student-centered institutions whose goal is to enable their students to make a contribution to society, grounded in knowledge and commitment. Both institutions have a reputation for excellence in their own domains.

Their presidents, Virginia Smith and Joseph Shenker, were comfortable initiating change and setting precedents. They were not micromanagers; they had enough faith in their senior faculty to turn them loose and let them plan a program. Both presidents enjoyed the confidence of funding agencies.

In Colton Johnson and Janet Lieberman, the presidents brought together two people with complementary backgrounds and attributes. Both are scholars, Johnson in the liberal arts discipline of literature and Lieberman in learning theory. Johnson knows Vassar and its traditions, and he was interested in building bridges to a Vassar education for students from two-year colleges. Lieberman brought her understanding of psychology and knowledge of LaGuardia's students and her conviction that they are capable of greater academic achievement and satisfaction than they know. For both of them, partnering opened opportunity for meeting a fundamental educational need: true academic articulation. They were not preoccupied by actuarial details such as credit transfer, major field concentration courses, or graduation requirements. Instead, their focus was wider: to address the lack of fit in the education system that Ernest Boyer identified in his *High School: A Report on Secondary Education in America* (1983).

Gaps in the System

At that time, the education system existed in a state of educational apartheid that had been accelerating while the rest of the world was becom-

ing more integrated and interactive. Institutions did not confront the disjunctions that existed in the learning continuum, nor students' lack of preparation to overcome those artificial separations. Instead, students who lacked skills were ghettoized. In trying to progress from one level to another, they faced paths filled with obstacles only the most determined could traverse.

With her design of Middle College High School, Janet Lieberman had successfully intervened in the high-school/college discontinuity. Development of sequential curricula for that high-school/college collaboration gave evidence that learning in grades nine through sixteen could and should be an eight-year continuum. Adoption of the Middle College concept in more than twenty cities across the country since that time has validated this view, but it has still not penetrated the mainstream. What Lieberman recognized as the arbitrary division of the system into four years for high school and another four for college still continues. Splitting postsecondary education between two-year and four-year institutions compounds the disjunction.

Clearly, educators need to re-examine the landscape and find ways of intentionally preparing students to move from one level to the next. Teachers and students must collaborate to challenge the barriers successfully. That is as true for the transition from two-year to four-year college as it is for the passage from high school to college.

But the barriers are many and they are embedded throughout the culture.

Most community college students have not enjoyed a great deal of academic success in their lives. High schools, particularly the big urban publics, tend to focus on the troubled and the nonachievers, while leaving bright students ignored and unchallenged. Without recognition or reinforcement, even the best and brightest underestimate their capacity to achieve. Often unaware of their latent abilities, they expect and get little preparation or encouragement for education beyond high school.

Unfortunately, the teaching that students typically receive at the com-

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Willa Panvini (ET '89, Vassar '92) says she "slept through high school." With no encouragement to attend college, she left Colorado for New York, went to work full-time and attended LaGuardia part-time. Teachers including Cecilia Macheski and Larry Rushing pushed her, sparking a desire to go beyond the community college.

She recalls Exploring Transfer as "the most frightening and inspiring experience." She had excelled easily at LaGuardia but found ET a different story. Hers was the largest class and a good deal of tension was generated during the session. By the end, though, students had changed and grown from the experience.

For Panvini, change included acquiring new confidence. She transferred to Vassar and after graduation was hired as a photographer/writer for the Vassar Quarterly magazine. She is now associate director of the college's alumnae/i association.

ET student in writing conference with a faculty member.

munity college level also has failed to capitalize on their talents. The common pattern is "teaching toward the middle," gearing tasks toward success for the majority rather than offering students the satisfaction of facing challenges and succeeding. Many who are first-generation college students are unfamiliar with the world of higher education and the broad range of options it offers. Unaware of career opportunities for liberal arts graduates, they concentrate on studies in accounting, computers, and other fields where they can see obvious and immediate job potential.

In 1983, LaGuardia particularly prided itself on its student-centered atmosphere; students felt protected and nourished. But the downside was overprotection and lack of challenge. Many students brought personal insecurities, low self-esteem, and fear of the unknown with them to class; few gained enough confidence while there to tackle the challenge of the baccalaureate system.

The college put minimal effort and resources into transfer. Students whose potential was recognized were subtly advised by their professors to transfer after their freshman years, a poor substitute for a targeted transfer program. And the college did nothing to prepare students for a four-year environment.

LaGuardia's faculty, too, seemed to have a deficit orientation. The stereotype of the community college as haven for the academically less able influenced their attitudes (just as it did the attitudes of faculty in four-year institutions). The faculty assigned limited amounts of required reading and written work. They outlined course requirements in detail and provided weekly schedules with specific assignments. They tested for mastery of factual material and the ability to parrot back information. Their expectations for students were low, which in turn reinforced students' own limiting views of themselves.

It was an inadequate preparation for baccalaureate study. Then as now, demands at the four-year level were fundamentally different. The pace of learning was faster. Students were required to read and write more, both in length and in frequency. Facts served to illustrate ideas; abstract concepts were the core of understanding; metaphor was the prevailing pedagogy. Faculty assumed their students shared a common background of skills and

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knowledge in the required disciplines.

The outstanding difference between two- and four-year institutions was the time devoted to scholarship — for students and for faculty. The discrepancy was particularly pronounced in the comparison with top-flight liberal arts colleges, where students and faculty saw learning and academic pursuit as a full-time occupation. Life on a residential campus emphasized study, intellectual discourse, and reflection. In urban community colleges, by contrast, the concept of full-time study was nearly unheard of. Students and faculty alike squeezed subway commutes, family and job responsibilities, and the work of teaching and learning into grueling schedules that rarely included the opportunity for scholarly conversation or pondering the significance of stimulating ideas.

The disparity compounded the difficult transition from two-year college to four-year. It discouraged the kind of cross-sector communication that would support students across the gap between the levels. Community college faculty cared deeply about their students. They knew that some could and should transfer, and they regretted the low number who did. But they were overworked, even burned out. Many suffered from the lack of prestige and scholarly interchange. This militated against offering their students a demanding curriculum and the extra support the students would have needed to get through it.

On the other side of the transfer gap, most four-year college faculty were unprepared to address the academic deficits and personal stresses the typical two-year college student presented. And no regular channels of contact with faculty colleagues at community colleges existed to foster greater understanding of the transfer students' needs.

This, then, was the system LaGuardia Community College and Vassar College challenged. Administrators and faculty alike were looking to foster student growth through collaborative action. The energy of the two faculties' conversation suggested that working together would be stimulating for them as well as for students. Johnson and Lieberman were seeking answers

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An immigrant from Colombia, Raphael Molina (ET '86, Vassar '91) had come to Queens for an education and to care for his father. At LaGuardia he studied English and liberal arts courses; his English professor, Leonard Vogt, recommended him for ET. Making the difficult decision to leave his home, he attended ET and went on to Vassar.

After taking time out to recoup his finances and attend to family needs, he returned to complete his Vassar degree and was hired by the Federal Reserve Bank. He has advanced to a position as trade analyst in the Foreign Currency Investment Department. At the same time, he has earned an MBA at Columbia and is studying for a second master's there, in international economy.

Molina says ET exposed him to educational opportunities and ways to pay for the education. He believes there should be more programs like it to help students see what they can do and succeed.

to a significant question for higher education. The convergence of goals and aspirations fostered a happy sense of shared mission. But ET's planners knew they had to take the challenge seriously in crafting an experience that would enable students and faculty to move from one level of learning to another.

Bridging the Gap: Transformational Education

Her grounding in learning theory led Lieberman to believe that nothing short of transformational education would demolish the two-year/four-year gap and create true articulation. The problem was not as simple as 2+2. It was: What can we do to change students' attitudes about themselves and education? How can they explore new roles? How can we help them make a successful transition from two-year to four-year learning?

But how to provide such a genuinely different learning experience? What would make a difference for students? In pursuing answers, two goals surfaced: The new program should validate students' intellectual worth, and it should give them a sense of membership in the intellectual community, with the recognition that the membership was transportable.

For Lieberman, Gary Orfield's (1981) work defining the organizational essentials of effective education offered a useful set of priorities: (1) to abandon the deficit model; (2) to change the environment; (3) to deal with self-expectation; and (4) to make a connection with people who care. Orfield had identified these conditions necessary for intrinsic motivation: involvement, choice, optimum challenge, positive feedback. The learning environment was the key factor; the model was one of talent development. Since the culture of academic life was transmitted through standards, students must have a working knowledge of the standards. They must have a chance to fail and a chance to recoup. The tools to achieve this were instruction, guidance, assessment, and positive feedback.

Given this framework, Lieberman saw that creating a mini-college experience for students was a logical course of action. To create a realistic environment, the experience would have to be sited at the four-year school. Unconventional as the pairing of Vassar and LaGuardia was at first sight, under scrutiny it, too, was logical. Although bringing together a public and an independent college could raise bureaucratic obstacles, more compelling factors made the pairing work. In their focus on students and teaching, on small classes and personal development, Vassar and LaGuardia had much in common.

For Colton Johnson, the idea to experiment with a pilot program bringing community college students to Vassar was simply pragmatic. He saw it as an experiential way to test his assumption that there was

> *a considerable constituency in this largely minority community college [who] ... had no involvement with residential, liberal arts education [but] could be developed as potential applicants — not only to my school but to others like it — by direct involvement with our kind of learning. (1988)*

Johnson envisioned a project that would also include students from nearby community colleges. Although their student populations were largely white, the students were in many ways similar to LaGuardia's. The strong performance of those students who had transferred to Vassar in the past reinforced his confidence in the experiment.

With his background as a faculty member, Johnson articulated as a fundamental principle that faculty must be given responsibility for the educational process. To be accepted by the full faculty, the project would have to involve respected and senior colleagues from each college. To gain faculty trust, as well as to change the image students had of themselves, the program's courses and the students' work would have to meet Vassar's standards. The faculty designing and implementing the courses would be the guarantors.

The standards were crucial for another reason: Courses would have to yield college credit to attract these low-income students. To justify the opportunity cost of missed summer employment, the community college students had to be making progress toward their degrees. So another fundamental principle was that courses would have to receive Vassar credit applicable toward a degree at a community college or any four-year institution.

The value of establishing high standards was supported by the work of Uri Treisman at the University of California at Berkeley. Based on his study of learning patterns among minority students there, Treisman had designed a project that held students to high expectations and formed them into study groups to help them meet the expectations. His research had shown that studying in groups was a natural part of the learning style of high-achieving students but was missing among low achievers. Treisman's strategy proved successful for students of color in the demanding academic culture of the University of California at Berkeley. His twin tenets — high standards and support through peer cooperation — would prove to be

equally effective for Exploring Transfer's students.

Johnson and Lieberman were convinced that the project had to focus on students, not institutions or structures. To achieve the program's goal would require a holistic approach; it could not be achieved piecemeal. Aimed at both educational and emotional change, the project would have to provide a new environment for learning. The emphasis would not be on formal articulation agreements between schools but on easing the students' transition from a polyglot, open-admissions urban college to a homogeneous, selective, rural one.

To carry out that conviction, Johnson suggested a process for credit transfer that was remarkable in its simplicity: Vassar faculty would review a random sample of transcripts from LaGuardia students who had grade point averages of 3.2 or above. Based on their review of five such anonymous transcripts, the Vassar faculty recommended that all credits from LaGuardia be accepted as lower-division credits at Vassar, excluding only those courses with the title "workshop." No formal agreements were signed then or since. Instead, the faculty planners made a commonsense decision, based on trust in the academic integrity of the partners and an interest in concentrating on students rather than red tape.

So, coming together from different perspectives, Johnson and Lieberman established principles that would be fundamental to Exploring Transfer. Their purpose was to expand the possibilities for students by infusing in them a sense of the power of humanistic learning. But the project was aimed at students whose aspirations were limited by their world. As one ET student would say later, "If you couldn't get there with a token, you didn't go." To build their self-esteem, to raise their sights, to help them see the power of knowledge, these students would need strong confirmation. Nothing could deliver that more effectively than success in a genuine Vassar experience. The concept of the power of the site — deliberately using the environment to change attitudes — demanded moving the urban, commuter students to the rural, residential setting, despite the human and logistical difficulties entailed.

chapter
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The Pioneers

Following up on the success of the initial Vassar/LaGuardia meeting, Colton Johnson and Janet Lieberman pursued the feasibility of a summer institute at Vassar for community college students. They met with Vassar's President Smith, who agreed to underwrite ET's first-year costs from discretionary funds in her budget. But Smith knew that to continue the project beyond its first year would require outside funding. She asked Johnson to work with Vassar's development office to seek grant support. Lieberman also took the institute idea back to LaGuardia's President Shenker, who approved with one caveat about choosing students: "Don't send them up to fail."

Given the green light, Johnson and Lieberman invited the initial cross-institutional faculty group to make more specific plans for courses, class schedule, and calendar.

Meanwhile, Johnson addressed another of his priorities: to increase Vassar's connections with community colleges in the Poughkeepsie area. He widened the program's feeder institutions to include neighboring Dutchess Community College and three other Hudson Valley community colleges, Rockland, Sullivan County, and Ulster County. Judy Kohl, of the Dutchess English faculty, who had encouraged a number of her top students to apply to Vassar, joined the faculty planning group.

The ethnic makeup of these new schools reflected the largely white population of the Poughkeepsie area, and more of their students came from middle-class families than was the case at LaGuardia. In other respects they reflected the typical two-year college mix: older students interested in higher education chiefly as a step to employment, working full- or part-time, often with families to support. If they aspired to transfer, it was to the nearby SUNY colleges at New Paltz and Binghamton. For most of them, Vassar might as well have been in another country.

ET faculty team members listen to student discussion.

Faculty Planning

Both the Vassar and the LaGuardia faculty in the planning group were experienced in team-teaching, and they agreed that this should be the institute's mode, with one member of each team from each college. Each of the two colleges also encouraged interdisciplinary courses, and the planning faculty agreed to feature them as part of the institute's curriculum.

As the discussion turned to possible courses, the group became increasingly enthusiastic about the project. Faculty from different academic disciplines began to explore their overlapping curricular interests and to pair off based on cross-discipline connections. A Vassar professor of cognitive science connected with a LaGuardia professor of critical thinking over generic ideas common in their teaching. Another pair discovered connections in history, sociology, and geography for a course on neighborhoods, cities, and American history. Brought together by their interest in helping students, these teachers were hooked by the promise of new intellectual challenges.

As the early planners remember it, there was a minimum of administrative oversight in the planning work. The group knew that the effort had the full support of their presidents and that faculty would be in charge of the curriculum. That combination of trust and support was an added inducement to participation. Voluntarism was the watchword of the program.

All of the planning group — faculty and administrators — shared the ideal of student-centered teaching. They understood that two-year students needed a bachelor's degree to succeed. And they shared the social goal of increasing the success rates for minority students. On another level, faculty hoped that the stimulus of a well-designed and effectively presented curriculum would move vocationally oriented learners to value liberal arts study.

Both Vassar's and LaGuardia's faculty wanted to challenge the students intellectually and engage their minds with exciting ideas, and the planners recognized that the program's success depended on subject matter with power to involve students. They also clearly understood the limitations of the students' previous educational experiences and the need to bridge the gaps in both pedagogy and academic pacing. Working in cross-sector teaching teams would make it easier to develop a curriculum that filled that complex bill. The team structure proved crucial in generating fac-

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ulty enthusiasm and ultimately became a major element in ET's faculty-development aspect.

Creating cross-institutional faculty teams meant that one member of each pair would be a scholar from a famous and respected independent college — where, as one of their own admitted, the faculty had an ingrained sense of elitism. The other team member would come from a public institution founded specifically to serve students who could not meet admissions standards such as Vassar's. Yet LaGuardia's teachers were scholars too, even if they had little time to pursue their scholarship; and Vassar's faculty were as dedicated to teaching as they were to scholarly interests. The chance to create a course in such a partnership and to make connections between disciplines generated intense energy on both sides.

At this point, six faculty members from the joint planning group — three from LaGuardia and three from Vassar — elected to be part of the first summer's teaching staff. They had found common academic interests and were excited about creating courses they had always wanted to teach. Each of them was a scholar who was dedicated to teaching.

For the LaGuardia faculty, this project offered the chance to see just how their students would handle high academic challenge in a setting away from the distractions of urban, commuter college life. The Vassar faculty were stimulated by the prospect of learners who were very different from the younger, well-prepared, but more sheltered students they knew.

As colleagues, the LaGuardia faculty appreciated seeing the Vassar perspective and exchanging understandings of inner-city life. For their part, Vassar faculty were surprised and impressed by the caliber of scholarship in their community college partners. Still, there was a certain wariness on each side. The community college teachers were not convinced that the Vassar faculty would be able to cope with their community college students, and the Vassar team members were not sure the students would be able to handle the rigor of their courses.

An important discourse followed, examining the differences between

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Harvey Flad is chair of Vassar's geography and geology departments and a veteran of three Exploring Transfer sessions. He appreciates his colleagues not only as fine teachers but also as scholars. He especially enjoys partnering with a literature teacher, as he did in 1995 with LaGuardia's Cecilia Macheski. He says, "It moves me along in my teaching of geography, gives me a different point of view."

Flad does team-teaching during the regular year too, but usually with other social science faculty. He calls teaching with community college faculty "an eye-opener ... for me, and important for Vassar. Academics is very medieval, hierarchical. One of the enduring hierarchies has been that of the two-year/four-year distinction. The community colleges are very much down on hierarchy." Of the students, he says, "For motivation and meaningful experience, you can't beat ET students."

the two-year and four-year experiences. Community college study was much more concrete. Syllabi were carefully outlined, pages were specified, and assignments precise. In the liberal arts college, course requirements were more general, goals were more abstract, and students had more choices.

The major difference, however, was in the pace. Vassar's courses required students to read an average of one book a week; at LaGuardia, one book every three weeks was typical. At Vassar, students typically wrote a weekly composition and a long research paper for each course; LaGuardia students wrote an average of three short papers per course. The planning task was to ease the transition, to bring the community college students up to Vassar's level with a minimum of trauma.

Again, the answer was team-teaching. One teacher would understand the students' needs and the other would know Vassar's standards, style, and focus on liberal education. Still another benefit for students in team-teaching was that they would see lifelong learning in action, as respected faculty learned with and from each other.

The Curriculum

So members of the two faculties paired off, attracted by mutual interest in topics. The shaping of the institute's courses transcended the traditional disciplinary boundaries, building on natural academic connections. Some faculty looked for themes that would truly integrate content from different fields, showing students how interrelated learning could be. Others explored linking different subspecialties within a single discipline. The sum curriculum would mirror Vassar's, which offered a mix of traditional and interdisciplinary courses.

Faculty also agreed the courses must speak to the students' experiences, highlighting issues that affected their lives and futures. In the course design, the faculty planned ways to involve students in such issues through provocative topics and readings, discussion groups, guest speakers, field trips, and assignments. Design incorporated a strong component of classroom discussion, through which, it was hoped, students would make connections between life experience and learning. Discussion would become a key element of the Exploring Transfer model, as outspoken urban students expanded their skills in classroom rhetoric. It was a new opportunity for students used to the traditional, passive, lecture mode of instruction.

Lieberman and Johnson encouraged the institute's faculty to incorporate high expectations, so successfully that one ET student later remarked

that the demands "fried their brains." To match the level of study at Vassar meant building in heavy reading and writing components. All the work would be compressed into a space of four weeks, instead of a Vassar semester. Thus, each course would require daily assignments, weekly papers, and reading an average of two books a week.

Aware of the leap the program would require, Johnson asked the faculty to consider how to compensate for the students' lack of preparation. Their reply was to ask for staff support to assist students with writing assignments and with learning word processing. They also requested a trained counselor to help students cope with the stresses of living away from home and family.

The institute's faculty met four more times during the first six months of 1985. Lieberman invited the teams to plan "a course they always dreamed of teaching." Together they studied each college's curriculum to find matching courses in both catalogs. Then each faculty pair created a course that met the requirements of the summer program while qualifying for credit at both institutions.

Courses designed for that first summer were "The Science and Practice of Thinking," taught by Janet Andrews of the Vassar psychology department and John Chaffee of the LaGuardia humanities department; "Environmental Impacts: Technology, Resources, and Social Values," taught by Joan Greenbaum, LaGuardia computer science and economics department, and Richard Hemmes, Vassar biology department; and "Conflict and Celebration in American Writing," taught by two English faculty members, Douglas Anderson of Vassar and Gilbert Muller of LaGuardia.

During the four-week institute, classes would meet five days a week, two hours each day. (After the first year, this format changed to five weeks, with Wednesdays open for field trips, research projects, and time in the library.) Students would choose two of the three courses offered, and if they completed the program they would receive credit for two Vassar courses. Attending the writing lab would earn them an additional credit, for a total of seven semester credits for the summer session.

A key intent of the experience was to create a learning community that extended beyond the classroom. Although it was an unstated concept, a holistic approach was implicit in the setting. Living on campus would give the institute's students easier access to its faculty outside the classroom. And discussions begun during class could continue at meals and in study sessions at night. Away from the distractions of home and work, students would focus on learning.

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Claudia Salazar (ET '85, Vassar '88) had come to the United States from Colombia only a few years before entering ET. The program faculty described her as "an outstanding student at LaGuardia majoring in data processing [who] was stimulated by her success in the program to seriously pursue the possibility of transferring to a selective four-year college, and being at Vassar allowed her to see this as a more accessible and desirable goal."

Salazar was the first LaGuardia graduate of ET to earn a degree from Vassar.

Selecting the Students

The planning group also began to develop admissions criteria, recruitment strategies, and a selection process. They agreed that their target population would be students from low-income families, the first in their families to attend college. Students who might have already applied to a four-year school would be unlikely to be chosen, since ET's objective was to overcome obstacles to transfer. The aim was to expand aspirations for students who did not recognize their own academic capacities and who definitely did not yet see themselves as attending a selective liberal arts college.

The original impetus for the project was to improve the transfer rate of minority students, and this remained a high priority. Yet Exploring Transfer was never *limited* to minorities. Instead, the full range of student diversity was the goal, with an emphasis on minority participation. Although Dutchess Community College and the other upstate collaborators enrolled only small numbers of minority students, LaGuardia's high enrollments ensured a strong cadre of students of color.

Students would be recruited not only from among those enrolled in college transfer programs but also from those pursuing so-called "terminal" degrees. Often such students were more goal oriented than those who expressed transfer intent. Many harbored tentative, unspoken desires to go beyond qualifying for a technician or office position, but they were even less likely than the transfer-bound to consider themselves material for a liberal arts college.

Another planning step was setting the admissions criteria. The typical community college student had already overcome obstacles just to enroll in college. Most were women, often single mothers, five to ten years out of high school and working full- or part-time, with spotty high school records at best. Divorce, unemployment, injury, even time in prison, might have triggered their return to education.

They commonly failed to recognize their own learning abilities and the value of their life experiences. Lack of success in school and lack of knowledge about potential options supported a recurring pattern of defeat. So clearly, a poor academic background should not eliminate any student

who otherwise had demonstrated talent — and perseverance — in recent college work.

On the other hand, LaGuardia's faculty were all too aware of the truth in the charge that what community colleges liked to call their "open door" often was actually a revolving one. LaGuardia president Shenker's caution to Janet Lieberman about not sending students up to fail reflected that truth. The faculty planners all understood his warning.

This led to the second admissions criterion: Applicants would have to show strong academic potential and have completed a year of college work with a grade average of at least a B. "Potential" was left undefined, but the planning assumption was that classroom faculty would be able to recognize it in students when they saw it. To avoid the revolving door, the program needed students capable of doing the work and handling the pressure to meet Vassar's high expectations.

Now the hard work of selection began. Team members from the community colleges asked their faculty colleagues and counselors to identify and encourage applications from students who fit the criteria. But getting a targeted student to apply was not an easy task. For all its glamour and obvious opportunity, the summer institute would require a considerable sacrifice. Mates and children would be left behind for more than a month; support systems of family and friends would be accessible only by telephone. The Vassar campus could seem a world away both physically and socially, especially for LaGuardia's urban students, some of whom had never been outside New York City.

Although long-term benefits were part of the program's rationale, in the short term participation in the program would be an economic drain on its students. Most of them worked all year round, but summer especially was a time to replenish depleted bank accounts. Going to Poughkeepsie in the middle of summer meant at least a shorter work period and in many cases losing a job entirely.

Altogether, this program whose promise was so clear to its faculty was going to be a hard sell for students who had never had the luxury of the long view. Here was a tremendous opportunity — a month at a college redolent of prestige, on a beautiful campus, earning credit for two Vassar courses. Nevertheless, it would take some convincing to persuade the selected students they could do it and that it would be worth the cost.

There was no general call for applications. Rather, faculty and counselors carefully and deliberately approached students who they believed

had shown academic ability, motivation, and grit to succeed. Such an invitation sent a message to the students that they had been singled out as having special promise. What remained was to convince them that the gains ET offered would outweigh the sacrifice.

Transfer 101: Application

To transfer to a four-year college or university, a student has to traverse a process much more complicated than admission to a community college. Transfer mechanics could seem overwhelming to a student population already lacking self-confidence, self-knowledge, and skill at coping with bureaucracy. Filling out forms properly, meeting deadlines, and choosing the right courses presented countless opportunities for frustration and error. Had the students chosen a course of study that fit their aptitudes and interests? Had they realized the value of consulting an advisor? Had they heard only what they wanted to hear, missed essential details, ignored a deadline? Or had they simply gotten poor advice?

To help ET's students prepare themselves, the summer institute's application process was designed to approximate the actual transfer experience as closely as possible. ET's application was not as arduous as a baccalaureate institution's freshman application; it did not require test scores and long advance planning. Nevertheless, it was enough of a step up from a community college application to be both intimidating and instructive. The first reaction of one LaGuardia student who looked at the ET form was typical, "This Vassar's not for me." Many of those invited to apply needed a strong dose of encouragement from their sponsors to get through it. It was their first lesson in Transfer 101.

Among the application's questions were two that asked whether anyone else in the student's family had gone to college, and whether the student had already applied to any four-year institutions. Affirmative answers could eliminate an applicant. In addition to completing the form, applicants had to provide two letters of recommendation, one from a teacher whose course required extensive writing. And students had to write an essay on their educational plans and aspirations. The essay not only provided information helpful in making the selection but also indicated the student's writing proficiency. The ET program would be writing intensive, which would be a problem for many community college students. Essay results would provide a basis for determining the level of help that students who were selected would need.

Academic Support

Clearly, ET's students were going to need the kind of support services community colleges traditionally offer. In particular, they would need help with writing. Even for those with adequate skills, the jump from the writing expectations at their community college to those at Vassar was dramatic. To help students make that jump, Vassar academic counselor and writing specialist Tom McGlinchey joined the institute's staff. To meet the myriad adjustment problems anticipated, LaGuardia sent one of its counselors, LaVergne Trawick. And Vassar juniors and seniors were hired as peer counselors to help orient ET's students to Vassar's library, computer lab, and academic resource center.

Such were the basic features of the institute devised by the faculty team, with advice from Johnson and Lieberman, for that first session in 1985. In the years since, Exploring Transfer has seen changes, but its basic concept remains, validated by the positive student and faculty outcomes.

Finances

As he worked with the faculty teams to plan the summer institute, Colton Johnson also was looking for grants to support it. For the students to give up four weeks of summer work was already a sacrifice; there was no way they would be able to pay for the experience. Fortunately for the students, Vassar's President Smith was committed to underwriting the project's first year, anticipating that its success would attract foundation support. Funds would be needed for tuition, room, board, textbooks, support services, and enrichment activities. Costs to the college, including faculty and staff salaries, living expenses for students and out-of-town faculty, books, and supplies, were budgeted at about $60,000.

The community college partners would have difficulty contributing to program expenses. Using public funds for a project offered at another institution was hard to justify. LaGuardia, however, had in 1984 been awarded one of the Ford Foundation's six $250,000 implementation grants in the Transfer Opportunities Program. LaGuardia's grant proposal, designed during the two years of its initial planning grant, covered several projects aimed at removing barriers to transfer for LaGuardia students. ET was only one of these. So, for the first three years of the program, that grant provided funding for a LaGuardia counselor at the Vassar summer session and transportation from Queens to Poughkeepsie for the students. It also augmented the salaries of the LaGuardia faculty, helping to defray relocation

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costs for the summer session.

Seeking funding for Vassar's $60,000 in program costs was Johnson's task, with support from the Vassar fund development office. As plans for the summer session neared completion, he learned from Charles Bunting, special assistant to President Smith, of a potential source of funds: a grant program of the Association of American Colleges and Universities (then the Association of American Colleges) funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to support two-year/four-year collaboration.

AAC&U is dedicated to advancing liberal education. In the early 1980s, its leaders had recognized that a significant segment of the nation's students earned their liberal studies credits in two-year colleges, yet relatively few continued on to four-year institutions. Looking to offset anticipated declines in their enrollments, some AAC&U campuses were becoming interested in attracting such students. In a 1983 survey of AAC&U members, a third of the respondents indicated that they "actively recruited transfer students from two-year colleges and viewed them as an important source of [upper-division] enrollments" (Wechsler 1989: 15). Another third were contemplating adopting similar strategies.

With this encouragement, AAC&U officers John Chandler, Stanley Paulson, and Jane Spalding decided to stimulate efforts promoting student transfer to four-year colleges. They had requested and received funding from the Mellon Foundation for twelve model partnerships between community colleges and baccalaureate institutions.

The two explicit goals of the AAC&U project were "uncovering and overcoming the barriers to transfer [and] maintaining four-year college enrollments" (15). A third implicit one was to acquaint community college students with the value of a liberal education. AAC&U knew that two-year transfer students normally enrolled in the large, public universities, because such students were often urban, and the universities were usually within commuting distance, relatively affordable, and familiar. Attracting community college students to independent liberal arts colleges would increase that sector's enrollments as it brought a new and diverse element to the student mix. AAC&U saw additional logic in the idea: The education the community college students were used to — small classes, faculty dedicated to teaching, strong student services — was closer to that of a liberal arts college than a large state university's. (Of the twelve grants awarded, eight went to collaboratives in which independent colleges or universities were the senior partners.)

Johnson contacted Stanley Paulson, who agreed to accept a late proposal from the promising Vassar project, and Vassar subsequently was awarded one of AAC&U's $15,000 grants, to help defray costs of the first institute.

That first year, the only other outside funding Exploring Transfer received was a $5,000 contribution from Chase Manhattan Bank. Chase has turned out to be one of the program's strongest supporters. Over the years, the bank has continued its contributions to ET, totaling more than $130,000 through 1995. (For a complete list of Exploring Transfer's funders, see the appendix.)

That First Summer

On May 6, 1985, twenty-seven community college students were sent letters by Sheila Thomas, Vassar's coordinator for ET's maiden voyage, informing them they had been chosen to participate in what was then called the "Vassar Summer Program for Community College Students." The students had been hand-picked by the program's faculty in a conscious effort to bring together a diverse group. Seven were white, twenty were students of color. Six were men; six were 23 or older. Eighteen came from New York City's LaGuardia Community College. Nine were from the upstate New York community colleges: six from Dutchess and one each from Rockland, Sullivan, and Ulster. They were diverse too in their reasons for attending community college: Some were enrolled in a transfer track, others intended to complete a two-year vocational degree and go to work.

Like the students, the institute's six teaching faculty were venturing into new territory, carrying the responsibility for the intellectual journey of the students chosen to join them. The team members had been working together over the previous six months on their courses. Each team had designed an integrated approach involving students in discussion, critical thinking, reading, and writing. They had established standards that matched Vassar's usual level of expectation. All of this was taken on by partners who had never worked together in a classroom nor taught this kind of student in such a hothouse setting. It was a tall order for everyone involved.

The first session of the Vassar Summer Program began on Saturday, June 22, 1985. Students arrived in time to check in, tour the campus, and meet for dinner in the college dining center. After welcomes from two college officials, students heard about Vassar and about its residence hall regulations and procedures. Then they spoke about their goals and what they expected from the institute. More meetings on Sunday afternoon intro-

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Janet Andrews and John Chaffee made up one of the first-year teaching teams. Andrews was on the Vassar psychology faculty but most of her teaching was in the multidisciplinary cognitive science degree program. Chaffee, a professor of philosophy, taught LaGuardia students how to use critical thinking as part of their daily lives and was author of a widely used text, *Thinking Critically*.

Andrews says it was just good luck that she and Chaffee both attended the initial meetings, found they had common interests, and put those interests together. For her, part of the collaboration was Chaffee's role in sensitizing her to the community college students' needs. Their two disciplines meshed well for this purpose: Chaffee's approach emphasized the role of critical thinking in clarifying life experience, while her subject, cognitive science, was more theoretical. Integrating their two approaches to the thinking process enabled students to understand how cognitive theory helped them lead thoughtful and productive lives. In other words, the partners gave a Vassar subject enhanced relevance for students while helping them develop the conceptual and language skills required in a Vassar course.

Andrews served one year as ET program director at Vassar, and Chaffee has been LaGuardia's ET coordinator since the program's inception.

duced the students to Vassar's academic requirements and resources, reviewed study skills, and gave them their first reading assignments. Classes began the next day.

Now each two-member faculty team would execute its innovative but untried plans. The students had already made their choice of two classes from the three offered. Monday morning saw their four-week schedule begin: two classes every day, each one meeting for two hours. Class size was about eighteen students each.

For most of the students, the classes were unlike anything they had ever taken. This was not rote learning, passive listening to lectures, following highly structured assignments, and taking multiple-choice tests. They worked harder and did more reading and writing than they had ever done in their community colleges. They discussed issues, studied materials, and completed homework assignments that connected with their lives. The faculty encouraged them to bring their own experience to bear on the intellectual discourse, but also to marshal theory, evidence, and logic along with that personal experience.

The cognitive science course brought together fundamentals of cognitive psychology, Janet Andrews's field, with concepts and skills of critical thinking, which John Chaffee was teaching at LaGuardia. Chaffee and Andrews challenged students to examine critically their own experiences of perception, memory, language, and thought processes. At the same time, the students learned the scientific framework for these concepts.

The two English professors, Douglas Anderson of Vassar and Gilbert Muller of LaGuardia, designed an exploration of key literary and cultural issues in American life since the Civil War. Their course looked at how American writers from Mark Twain to Toni Morrison both exposed cultural conflicts and celebrated the diversity of the American experience.

LaGuardia's Joan Greenbaum was already an interdisciplinarian, having published books on both computer science and economics. She joined Richard Hemmes, a Vassar biology professor, in introducing students to environmental science, especially its complex relationships with human activities and social values. Case studies drew students into the process of making decisions about the environment based on relevant data.

When students were not in class, they were in the library, the academic resource center, or the computer lab; they were talking with faculty, counselors, and peers, meeting with their study group, or reading one of their sixteen assigned books. Mealtimes found them, the faculty, and Vassar's peer counselors continuing discussions begun in class.

Among other assignments, students wrote a paper each week, and faculty always asked for rewrites. Tom McGlinchey was the resource for help with writing skills. He had long experience in assisting Vassar's students with their writing and had helped local community college students as well. The short four-week session and much heavier writing assignments revealed that the community college students needed significant help; McGlinchey was much in demand.

Students talked with one another far into the night about the ideas their teachers were tossing at them so rapidly. This was part of the power of the site in the residential experience. Instead of commuting to classes and rushing off as soon as classes were over, the students shared living quarters and classes; they studied in groups; they challenged and commiserated with one another. The system fostered immersion in a dynamic learning experience, supported by comradeship with their fellow students and their teachers.

Students also attended — not always willingly — social and recreational activities arranged for them. But these older, normally self-reliant students found the extracurricular program condescending. Able to relate to one another without benefit of ice-breaking games, they neither needed nor wanted programmed leisure activities. When it came to their spare time, they wanted free choice; what they needed and wanted was one-on-one tutoring and time for study groups, library work, lessons on the computer.

Many were homesick; most got discouraged at one point or another. All were stretched further than they had thought possible. The workload was intense. Added to that pressure was the stress of missing home and family and the strangeness, especially for the city dwellers, of the quiet campus with a library that "looked like a cathedral." But all twenty-seven

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Michelle Courtney Berry (ET '85, Harpur '88, Cornell '92) has crowded a lot of activity into the years since she was in ET. Commencement speaker at her graduation from Harpur College of SUNY Binghamton, Berry's next step was graduate school at Cornell. There she earned a master's degree in communication. She also developed and managed a collaborative program between Cornell and Tompkins Cortland Community College to help minority students negotiate the barriers to entrance and success at the university.

She went on to serve as the city of Binghamton's community relations director under both Democratic and Republican administrations. Leaving that post to focus full-time on her own public relations, marketing, and motivational speaking business, Berry soon took on an assignment to coordinate a Broome County effort called "Facing Our Future." She continues to run her consulting business; meanwhile, she is giving voice to her first love, poetry, producing poetry readings and shows throughout the country. A book of her poems was published in fall 1997.

stayed the course. They did all that was asked of them, completing two genuine Vassar courses — legal tender when they returned to their community colleges to finish their degrees or transferred to four-year schools.

At the end of the session, students and faculty were both joyous and sad. They were exhausted by the effort, but at the same time proud to have made it and in a way reluctant to leave the campus and return home. The students had bonded deeply with one another and with their teachers, many developing friendships with faculty mentors that they realized were once-in-a-lifetime occurrences. They knew they would never be the same, yet they were going back to resume the life they had lived before Exploring Transfer.

Like any intense experience, ET had positive and negative aspects. One student said it was "like swimming from a pool to the ocean; at times the waves washed over you." Another compared it to going to a fitness center, saying he used to read three books a month, but by the end of the program he had worked up to three a week.

Ultimately, the intensity was key to the transforming nature of the experience. The high academic challenge and stimulation, combined with the holistic environment of the residential college, altered the students intellectually and personally. Their most significant discovery was that they could achieve: "If I could do ET, I can do anything." The self-awareness and self-confidence they gained from scaling the heights of an elite institution forever altered their view not only of themselves and their abilities but also of the options open to them.

It changed their values too. The power of liberal learning, in bringing the students' life experiences together with critical analysis of intellectual concepts, broadened their sense of the meaning of education. The sum of these effects was to re-create their outlook, their direction, and their expectations of themselves.

The faculty were equally affected by the program's intensity. They

found it more demanding but also more rewarding than they had expected. The students had been insatiable in their demands for time, advice, and counseling. Designing a new course that involved another discipline and then teaching it in four weeks was grueling work. The LaGuardia faculty felt that the opportunity for scholarly partnership was ample compensation. They found the team-teaching rewarding and challenging, particularly the collaborative discourse about their academic disciplines. The Vassar faculty, too, learned from their partners' curriculum approaches and teaching methods. Both faculties were amazed and exhilarated by the students' curiosity and eagerness to learn, their determination to succeed in spite of pressure, fatigue, and academic fright. In short, it was a transforming experience for everyone who participated.

Reminiscing about that first summer, LaGuardia English professor Gilbert Muller remembers the enormous culture shock ET was for its students. The learning pace was more intense, writing standards were higher, and reading assignments heavier than any of them was used to. At the end, students and faculty were equally exhausted. Yet his overriding impression is one of resilience and success. In the literature course Muller taught with Vassar's Douglas Anderson, all the students received at least a B as measured by Anderson's Vassar-standard grading scale. Muller remembers too how his teaching partner was moved by the encounter with students who engaged him about his personal life and values.

Psychologist Janet Andrews found that the community college students expected her to justify why they should interrupt their lives to study what she wanted them to learn. This was a new challenge, something her Vassar students had taken for granted. Discussing the intensity of that first, four-week session, Andrews recalls a crisis point at which the faculty had to allay the students' anxieties and even hostility in some cases. It was a natural outgrowth, she believes, of the fact that for most of the students, ET was a new experience intellectually, socially, and emotionally. Through long and intense talks late into several nights, the faculty and students came to a satisfying resolution.

In one sense, such a crisis was an important element of the learning process, one that has happened in other ET sessions since. It also bore out Andrews's sense that this kind of program carries a daunting responsibility: the potential to greatly benefit students, but also a potential risk if students do not have a good experience. Yet, with all the intensity, the developing, and the experimenting, that first year was very successful for most students,

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LaGuardia English professor Gilbert Muller lived on the Vassar campus during the first session of Exploring Transfer. (He also returned the second year, sharing a house on campus with John Hyland, another LaGuardia professor.)

Muller recalls sweltering heat with no air conditioning and being on call from morning to midnight to counsel students. Yet he says that through the experience he and other community college faculty were regenerated and rededicated to academic rigor and the transfer mission. For students, it was a bonding experience that was not available in the commuter school.

Andrews maintains. It was clear that the program worked.

It was also clear that the application and selection processes were effective. As one faculty report noted, "The students in our course exhibited a genuine intellectual enthusiasm, and the quality of their work was uniformly high." According to another faculty team, the students were "outspoken, direct, inquisitive, eager, prepared for class, attentive, industrious, and enthusiastic." This evaluation went on to say that writing and quiz taking presented obstacles for the students, obstacles most overcame during the four weeks.

In its evaluation report, each team cited the diversity of the class as a significant aspect of the experience. One team's final report recommended that "the program should be oriented primarily, if not exclusively, toward minorities. In our course, the strongest, most engaged students were minority students for whom this program represented both a dramatic opportunity and a dramatic change from their customary educational surroundings." All the first-year faculty teams echoed the importance of a large cadre of students of color.

Faculty also were uniform in praise of the team-teaching experience, the challenge and rewards of sharing new academic territory. The strategy let them give students solid individual attention and demonstrate the pleasure of intellectual discourse, the interplay of two points of view. Further, the pairing of one teacher who knew community college students and their needs with another who knew Vassar's demands and standards gave the students an invaluable combination of support and challenge.

Of course, that first session revealed some flaws in the initial program, too. To expect students to make the great leap into the new environment, with its new, higher standards for workload and performance, had its hazards. One student was stunned when she discovered that the stack of sixteen books she had been given was not for her and her roommates but just for *her*. The students complained about the stress of covering so much so fast. Cramming so much reading and writing into just four weeks, the faculty agreed, put too much pressure on the students and didn't allow them enough time to absorb the material.

The students also needed a great deal of emotional support. Fortunately, Johnson and the other planners had chosen an outstanding group of teachers, who understood the students and their problems. These dedicated teachers served as mentors, advisors, and general holders of hands. Their understanding and openness compensated for what oversights and shortcomings existed in such an ambitious and risky experiment. With the intensity of their teaching responsibilities, though, to provide all the support outside the classroom that students needed was a strain on the faculty.

Faculty and student evaluations for that first session influenced the future direction of the program. What they emphasized most strongly was the power of the experience for students and faculty. The essence of Exploring Transfer is captured in the words of a faculty member from that first session:

> *Our greatest reward was in watching our students grow and mature over these four short weeks. The transformations in some cases were astonishing.*

chapter
5

Evolution

Response to that first Vassar summer session reinforced the founders' faith in the program. Despite the academic demands made on them, all twenty-seven of its students completed the session, acquiring new confidence and new aspirations for themselves. For the faculty, student growth would have been rewarding enough, but the faculty found themselves changed as well. The students had challenged and stimulated them; the interaction with new colleagues and the teaching and learning process had evoked fresh satisfaction in their craft.

Capitalizing on the enthusiasm generated by the first session, Exploring Transfer's planning group organized to repeat and improve it. Its faculty and staff reviewed the program in a collaborative forum. They celebrated its overall success, for the students and for themselves. They also scrutinized its problems and recommended changes to alleviate those that seemed solvable. This practice of review and evaluation by faculty and staff has continued with each summer session. The attitude of continuing examination and improvement has done much to maintain Exploring Transfer's effectiveness and the strength of faculty involvement.

Exploring Transfer has always remained true to its holistic nature, but in some aspects the program has evolved. Frances Fergusson, Vassar president since ET's second year, points out that flexibility has been a basic characteristic of the program from its beginning. She suggests that as times change, Exploring Transfer will change with them. For Vassar, she says, "the basic premise is to look for opportunities to ally ourselves with talented students coming out of community colleges." The premise has been a constant under Fergusson. She immediately recognized the program's "vibrancy, visibility, and good leadership" and has supported it consistently since then. She credits Colton Johnson's work, involvement, and commitment with keeping the program going. ET also has the full support of Vassar's dean of faculty, Norman Fainstein, new in 1996, as well as of Vassar's alumnae/i, who see it as enhancing the college's social commitments.

Changes Following the First Summer

One of the first changes after that inaugural summer was in the schedule. The intense academic demands of the four-week session, compounded by limited library hours, provoked both students and faculty to call for ways to reduce the time pressures. To accommodate this need without short-changing the curriculum, ET's faculty and staff decided to lengthen the program from four weeks to five. Wednesdays were left open for research and study. This schedule worked well, and it has prevailed in the ensuing years.

Complaints about inadequate time in the library were matched by similar frustrations with inadequate time in the computer lab and lack of training on its equipment. Vassar was far ahead of most community colleges in expecting its students to use word processing for their written work, and the faculty wanted ET's students to develop the same skills. Faculty recommended building in regularly scheduled time and assistance in the computer lab, and they requested more time for students in the library. These needs continued into subsequent summers, and Vassar responded by funding additional staff to support longer hours.

Pressures of the coursework, with its heavy writing and reading requirements, also led to calls for increased support services. From the early planning days, faculty had said the students would need both academic and personal counseling, but the unexpected intensity of that need quickly became clear that first summer. As Janet Andrews and Gilbert Muller recall, all the faculty along with Tom McGlinchey were heavily involved far beyond the time they spent teaching in class. Then, too, the experimental nature of their courses and the challenge of creating a stellar educational experience required them to spend far more than the usual amount of preparation time.

Faculty from the first session made several recommendations to relieve some of this pressure both on themselves and on students. One was to build in more counseling and tutoring services. The expanding role of

impact

Andrew Bush chairs the Hispanic Studies Department at Vassar and teaches Spanish language and literature. He signed up for ET because it gave him the chance to teach outside his discipline. For two summers, he and LaGuardia's John Henry Davis taught courses together with a focus on drama. In their first course, which combined drama and creative writing, students wrote and staged a dramatic scene. Now Bush regularly includes the assignment to write and present a video production in one of his language classes.

He says, "I use techniques daily that I learned from John Henry, a master teacher. He is the 'ghost in the Spanish classroom.' ... Exploring Transfer is not a case of Vassar giving a hand to the community colleges." To which an observer added, "Bush is a superb teacher learning from another superb teacher."

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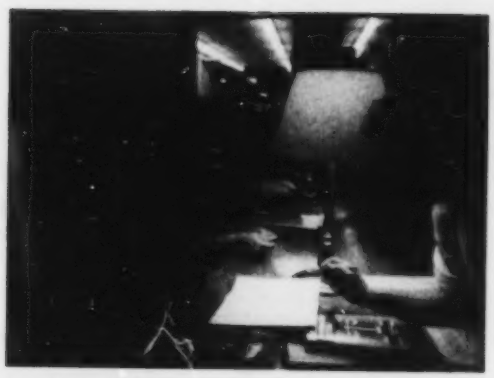

Faculty members counsel student on ET writing assignment.

the peer counselors has been a response to this need. Another was to provide more thorough orientation. Students needed more time to adjust to their new academic situation and to get acquainted with their classmates, their teachers, and their surroundings. They also needed more assurance in the beginning that although they were embarking on a demanding program, they would have the resources and the support to succeed. This kind of direct support replaced extracurricular, get-acquainted activities.

Another suggestion had to do with students' next steps after ET. As the planners had hoped, a number of the first session's graduates expressed interest in going on to study at independent liberal arts colleges, especially Vassar. But the high cost of the residential college and the students' lack of knowledge of scholarships and transfer processes were major obstacles. Plainly, future sessions should include information on these topics. In response, Vassar's director of admissions, James Montoya, set up a seminar on application processes and financial aid, which became a permanent feature of the Exploring Transfer program. Providing the knowledge students need to negotiate the system effectively undoubtedly increases the number who transfer, especially those who continue their education in liberal arts colleges.

Changes Over Time: Community College Partners and Student Selection

One major change over the first twelve years of the program has been the makeup of the collaborative. One of the original five community college partners, Sullivan County Community College, sent no students after the first year. (However, Sullivan's one ET student, Michelle Berry, has already made a mark in her community. See "Impact" on page 42.) Rockland Community College remained active only through the 1992 session.

New partners have been added, though, from upstate New York and from New York City. Borough of Manhattan Community College sent its first group of ET students in 1988. Orange Community College and Westchester Community College joined in 1989, and Bronx Community College in 1994. As of 1997, seven colleges — including Dutchess, LaGuardia, and Ulster from the original group — send students and faculty to the program. The

Comm Coll/ Year	85	86	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	Total
Bronx										1	4	2	7
Dutchess	6	8	15	18	15	15	7	8	8	11	8	6	125
LaGuardia	18	21	24	21	23	20	10	9	9	10	13	11	189
Manhattan				4	3	10	6	6	9	4	4	8	54
Orange County					2	6	2	3	4	3	3	1	24
Rockland	1		1	1			4	2					9
Sullivan	1					3							4
Ulster	1	1	5	6	1	3	3	4		1	1	2	28
Westchester					5		4	4	4	4	1	3	25
unknown			1										1
Total	27	30	46	50	49	57	36	36	34	34	34	33	466

Figure 1: data supplied by Tom McGlinchey, Vassar College

upstate colleges were added as part of Vassar's continuing effort to broaden local involvement; the additional New York City colleges came in as word of the program's success spread. Exploring Transfer's administrators welcome the opportunity to expand their program's influence.

Involvement of the other community college partners has included more than just sending students. The planning committee added a faculty member from Ulster County Community College on one of the second-year teaching teams. Since then, Ulster faculty have taught in two other sessions, Manhattan has sent faculty to three teams, Dutchess to fourteen teams, and LaGuardia to twenty-six teaching teams. A number of faculty have served more than once, as the planning committee balances two competing goals: maintaining continuity and extending the opportunity to more faculty.

As the nature of the partnership has changed, the number and characteristics of the students have fluctuated. After ET's first two years, when enrollment was twenty-seven and then thirty-one students, the number of applicants and acceptances increased. Between 1987 and 1990, session enrollment ranged from forty-six to fifty-seven students (see figure 1). To keep the student-faculty ratio low, ET's staff increased the number of course offerings from three to five and then, in 1990, to six. But by 1991, grant funds had dwindled, so costs, and hence courses offered and students served, had to be cut back.

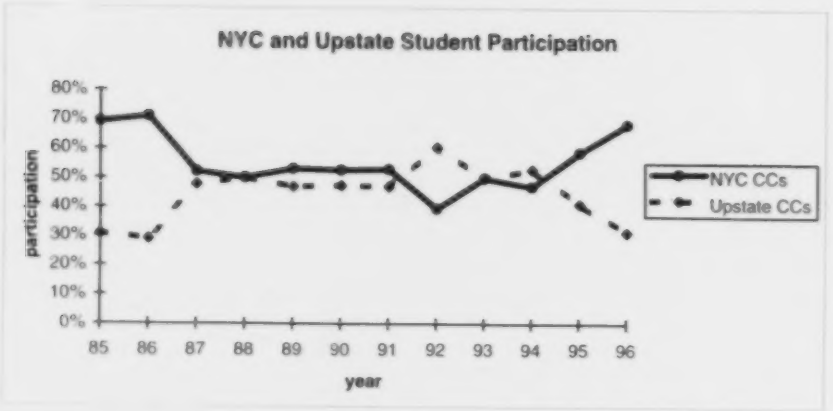

Figure 2

In recent years, enrollment has stabilized at around thirty-five students. Tom McGlinchey, now Vassar's coordinator for the program, considers this the optimum number. Class size can be held at eighteen to twenty-two students, and each student is in at least one class with every other participant. Community life in the dorms also works best with a group of about thirty-five. McGlinchey says, "We learned you have to reproduce ET in cells."

It is important too, as Colton Johnson observes, that the students are not in all the same courses. The program is organized so that students also learn from the course they are not taking, through discussion with their peers outside the classroom. This mirrors what happens at Vassar during the regular term, and it demonstrates another important facet of the impact of the residential campus experience.

The increase in size of the cohort coincided with an increase in the number and proportion of students coming from upstate colleges (see figure 2). That in turn influenced the ethnic makeup of the groups. At the start, LaGuardia recruited the largest number of students. Its heavy minority enrollment ensured a preponderance of students of color. But increasing participation of colleges from outside New York City changed that ethnic balance. In 1987 and 1988, more than half of ET's participants were white, compared with about a third in 1985 and 1986 (see figure 3).

For example, the student body at Dutchess Community College, located in Vassar's home town of Poughkeepsie, is about 90 percent white but

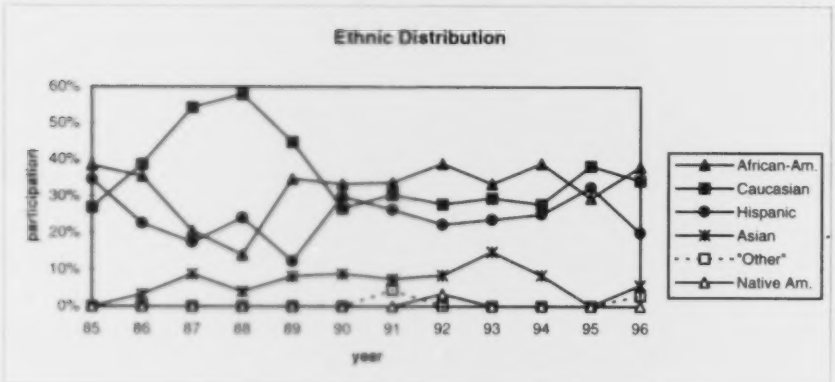

Figure 3

diverse economically, its students ranging from poverty level to middle class. Transfer has always been recognized as a key element of the Dutchess mission; many local students stay home for their first two years of college. Dutchess has had an honors program since before 1985. Its liberal arts faculty assumed that at least half of their students would transfer to a nearby branch of the State University of New York. Before ET, however, few of them thought of their students in terms of elite liberal arts colleges. But as students returned to Dutchess from Exploring Transfer with new expectations of themselves and the college, their teachers began to see them differently.

Faculty began recognizing many promising students, often from the honors program, who would benefit from Exploring Transfer, even if their profile was different from that articulated by the original ET planning group. Some of these students' parents had gone to a SUNY college; the students expected to go to SUNY; and their teachers expected the same. What was new for them was the possibility that they might aspire to a different kind of college and a more expansive learning experience. More important, teachers familiar with the power of ET to awaken its participants to their own capacities now wanted that experience for their most promising students. They sought admission to the Vassar summer program for their honors students.

Then, too, as ET flourished, its graduates spread the word back home

at all the partner colleges, and others heard about the program and spread the word further. At the same time, the economic value of the bachelor's degree, particularly from "the right college," was becoming more widely realized. Savvy students saw Exploring Transfer as a step along the fast track to the Ivy League. In its early years, ET's faculty had targeted and hand-selected applicants from a fairly small pool. As students became more sophisticated, the number of applications from better-qualified candidates increased.

This created a dilemma: whether to choose applicants who had stronger academic backgrounds, or to take risks on less-proven candidates who possessed high potential. Faculty who tended to nominate their "stars" contradicted the program's original intent to seek students of unrealized potential who were marginalized for reasons of class, race, or other societal circumstance. Janet Andrews says, "It was tough to find the right balance. No one wanted students to fail, but we didn't want to take those who didn't need the program."

Through ongoing dialogue, the selection committee has since reaffirmed ET's original intent. Its criteria continue to reflect Vassar's interest in broadening access to the opportunities offered by a liberal education. The criteria also serve the community colleges' mandate to provide an open door to the historically underserved. To make the selection process work, though, requires extensive and thoughtful discussion by the selection committee to reach consensus on accepting or rejecting students from among a talented pool. The committee also considers the makeup of the total group in trying to shape the best possible class.

In recent years, with the reaffirmation of ET's original selection criteria and the inclusion of more urban colleges, the proportion of students of color again resembles that of ET's first years. Since 1990, the ratio has stabilized at about one-third white and two-thirds students of color (see figure 4).

Changes in Team-Teaching, Counseling, Advising

Procedures for constructing the instructional program and preparing and nurturing the faculty teaching teams have been refined over the years in light of yearly faculty and student evaluations. Each September, the planning committee begins the process for the following summer. First they determine broad curricular areas, then the members look for just the right faculty pairs to develop and teach the courses. By February, faculty teaching teams are in place and working on their courses for the approaching session.

Teaching teams meet several times during the winter and spring. In

ET Enrollment by Ethnicity and Year

Ethnicity/ Year	85	86	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	Total	%96
Asian	1	1	4	2	3	4	2	3	5	3		2	30	6%
African American	8	9	8	7	16	20	12	14	10	12	9	10	135	30%
Caucasian	7	12	23	29	22	16	12	10	11	10	13	12	177	36%
Hispanic	9	6	8	12	6	17	9	8	8	9	12	8	112	24%
Native American							1	1					2	0%
other	1		1		2		0					1	5	3%
unknown	1	2	2										5	0%
Total	27	30	46	50	49	57	36	36	34	34	34	33	466	

Figure 4: data supplied by Tom McGlinchey, Vassar College

their meetings and by telephone and email, they review content, readings, assignments, and grading criteria. More important, these one-to-one interactions set the stage for true team-teaching. In their planning together, faculty are preparing to model intellectual discourse for their students in the classroom, who will see them sharing and differing in their points of view, supporting and disagreeing with each other, complementing each other's presentations with their own specialized knowledge.

Adequate planning is essential; genuine team-teaching is arduous as well as stimulating. As Janet Andrews says, "Courses must be very well organized. There is no luxury for fooling around, because of the [time] compression. Goals must be totally clear, but the teachers must be flexible." Teacher Nan Bauer-Maglin, of Borough of Manhattan Community College, says of her 1995 stint as a team member, "We put in hours and hours together. We write out almost everything, then make changes [in response to what happens in the classroom]."

It is also critical to the program that the planning group identify that year's curricular areas early in order to ensure that top-flight teachers will be available. This has been especially true for science faculty, who plan their research projects far in advance. Some science faculty have had to turn down invitations to teach in Exploring Transfer because they were already involved in grant-funded projects. To solve this problem, ET's planners have sometimes looked two sessions ahead to staff science courses.

In the beginning, the courses were perhaps overprepared, according to Tom McGlinchey. Faculty knew the project was an experiment, and they

wanted to give it every chance to succeed. Now, he says, "we encourage greater flexibility and day-to-day preparation — taking what happened yesterday and using it today." It helps to have some teachers who have ET experience returning each year, in some cases teaching the same course for the second time.

In fact, program policy now calls for having one faculty member with ET experience on each teaching team. This gives new members the benefit of coaching on ET's team-teaching system. Early on, staff spent some time on a few occasions working with new faculty who did not pick up the team concept right away. But more recently, the problem has largely been addressed by pairing every newcomer with a veteran, McGlinchey says. He recalls at most three or four cases in which the pairings did not work well and the team-teaching suffered as a result. Learning from the many successful pairings and the few unsuccessful ones has honed the skills of the planning committee in bringing the right teachers together.

Over the years, housing arrangements for visiting faculty have become more flexible. Vassar has always made some form of housing available for out-of-town faculty who chose to live on or near the campus. Each year the situation changes with the needs of the faculty: Some city dwellers prefer to commute; others may already live or have summer homes near Poughkeepsie. Most summers, however, at least one visiting faculty member has lived on campus. In 1996, two Vassar faculty lived on campus as well.

For students, having faculty nearby adds another dimension to the holistic nature of the residential college experience. Easy access to their teachers outside the classroom provides opportunities for extended, informal teaching relationships to develop, which is one of the benefits of that experience. However, after a few years of Exploring Transfer, the planners decided faculty should not be available to students in the evenings. That way, faculty wouldn't be tempted to micromanage the students' lives and they wouldn't undercut the role of ET's peer counselors. Faculty eat lunch in the college dining hall and often spend much of the day on campus, so opportunity remains for informal contact. The experience still engenders strong student-faculty friendships, and many students continue to write and visit their teachers long after the summer session is over.

ET's 1996-1997 program director, Cecilia Macheski, believes the limits on faculty availability have helped students take more responsibility for their own adjustment. It may be one reason that recent cohorts have seemed more calm and independent. In the last few years, faculty who had learned

to expect a student crisis about the third week of the session have been left asking one another "When does the crisis happen?" It appears that students and counselors are solving problems before they reach the crisis stage.

With the program firmly established and its benefits proven, Exploring Transfer's officers now look for ways to share its benefits more widely. Colton Johnson, Tom McGlinchey, and Judy Kohl, who has taught several ET courses and represents Dutchess Community College on the planning committee, regularly visit the upstate partner colleges to talk about the program. During one of these visits, faculty at Westchester Community College asked for more information about the team-teaching. This led to the realization that Exploring Transfer faculty had developed a body of knowledge about team-teaching worth sharing. It is a model that works for community college students, leading them to new levels of academic performance and raising their sights to higher goals.

In response, Kohl and Cecilia Macheski have designed a project to disseminate the team-teaching model. Vassar and community college faculty who have taught in the Exploring Transfer program will present workshops on the ET curriculum methods at partner campuses. Interested teachers will then visit the summer session to see the team-teaching model in action.

The ET experience demonstrates that cross-sector team-teaching, as pioneered in Middle College between high school and college faculty, has important pedagogical impact. Hearing two authorities from different educational sectors discuss and disagree teaches students the elements of logic and moves their proofs from the personal to factual, incisive argument. Seeing collaboration by two teachers, often of different races and genders, generates new student attitudes. For faculty, this team model calls for a new way of teaching involving shared responsibility and different ways of sequencing and structuring the content of learning.

The outreach efforts of Kohl, Macheski, and other ET faculty will benefit Exploring Transfer as well, by building a wider pool of faculty prepared to teach in the program. Participating in the workshop and observing the summer session will help those faculty understand ET's pedagogy and curricular principles. If they decide to volunteer for an ET teaching assignment, they will already have a head start. Their participation also will enhance their ability to recognize the kind of student ET targets. Academics is not the only criterion; personal characteristics matter too. The student who does best in ET has an open mind and is aggressive, ready to confront and to be challenged.

impact

Elva Adams (ET '93, Vassar '96) became a single parent when her husband died. She held a management position at IBM but enrolled at Dutchess Community College in liberal arts with the goal of going on to SUNY New Paltz to study education. She says of her ET experience, "When you leave, you are depressed, in a cocoon, and then you unfold like a butterfly."

Adams's unfolding led her to apply and be accepted at Vassar. She was a peer counselor for two summers, because, she says, "I love ET so much." As a counselor, she was writing tutor, van driver, advisor on everything from time management to homesickness.

Now she is a high school teacher and a consultant to IBM. She is studying for a master's degree in English-as-a-second-language at Manhattanville College and planning to use her skill in Spanish (her mother is from Puerto Rico) to teach ESL. Adams is especially proud of her son, a 1997 graduate of the University of Colorado whose next step is the U.S. Navy's Flight School.

The role of the peer counselors also has evolved over the years. After ET's first two years, its faculty asked to have a peer counselor assigned to each course. They suggested that these Vassar juniors and seniors, often former ET participants themselves, should sit in on classes so they would know more about the material and the assignments when they tutor ET's students. Peer counselors now meet regularly with the faculty, providing a two-way conduit for information and concerns about the coursework. After class, they are available in the dorms to help students not only with their coursework but also with the stress of spending five intense weeks away from family and friends.

Thus the peer counselors are front-line resources for students and for faculty, enriching the learning community. The job gives the ET graduates an opportunity to give back to the program and also to develop potential career skills, as teachers, for example.

Everyone recognizes the danger of overworking these counselors, so the faculty encourage them to put realistic limits on their time. When ET's students transfer into the real world of a senior college, they can't expect the kind of dedicated support the program's peer counselors give them. It's a fine line for the counselors between giving the students enough assistance to make it through the summer session and coddling them. Not crossing that line can be difficult for counselors who themselves have ridden the roller coaster of Exploring Transfer and empathize with its intense ups and downs. Elva Adams, an ET graduate who twice served as a peer counselor, says, "They tell us not to mother them, but when the students need it, what can you do?" In her interactions with ET's students, it is clear that the mentoring relationship is one of the program's keys to success.

Although ET encompasses much more than preparation for transfer, that is one of its basic purposes and a key attractor for students. It is a part of the program that has continued to expand, building on interest in the transfer information session James Montoya began during ET's second year.

In recent years, transfer counseling begins with a question-and-answer session with ET's faculty, who explain how to choose and apply to colleges and point out the range of possibilities and resources students can tap. These transfer seminars help ET's students recognize that transfer is a real possibility for them. At a session in 1995, one student explained, "I'm trying to get used to the idea that ET students are desirable to these colleges. Where do I start?"

After this session by ET's faculty, college admissions staffers come to talk about their institutions. Recognizing the value of the ET experience, schools such as Columbia, Cornell, Sarah Lawrence, Smith, Wesleyan, SUNY Binghamton, and SUNY New Paltz, as well as Vassar, participate. Advisors from the colleges reinforce the message that ET students are a desirable commodity. They are attractive to top-flight schools because they are mature learners who have a sense of what to expect from senior college study. They have shown they can not only survive but succeed in a demanding academic program. It means they are less likely to be discouraged by transfer shock, more likely to stay the course than the average transfer student. The interest of selective institutions in ET's students is a concrete example of how Exploring Transfer has changed the attitudes of four-year colleges toward community college students.

With their sights raised to consider applying at residential liberal arts colleges, students next must face the struggle to pay tuition and living expenses, often including care for children. It would be hard to continue working, as most students do while attending community college. Vassar and other independent colleges are prepared to offer significant financial aid, which enables many, though not all, applicants to leap this hurdle. For its residents, New York's Tuition Assistance Program also helps by supplementing federal financial aid for attendance at both independent and public institutions within the state.

Organizational Change

Another area of change is the Exploring Transfer program's organization. One aspect of that evolution has been a move toward greater faculty control. For the first three years, Colton Johnson directed the ET program, along with his regular duties as Vassar's dean of studies. In 1988, he turned the responsibility over to ET's faculty, but continued to oversee the program and to marshal Vassar's resources to ensure its existence. Observers credit him with keeping the program afloat at Vassar, championing it as an

important college effort and seeking grant funds to help pay for it.

The first program director from the faculty was Vassar's Janet Andrews, who served in 1988, followed by Obika Gray, also of Vassar, who directed the 1989 and 1990 sessions. Both had taught in the program, as had Larry Rushing of LaGuardia, who directed the program from 1991 to 1995. Rushing was also a visiting member of the Vassar faculty during 1990-91. LaGuardia's Cecilia Macheski was program director in 1996 and 1997.

The program director is responsible for overall planning, selecting faculty, chairing the student selection process, choosing courses, scheduling, and evaluation. In carrying out these tasks, the director works closely with a group of campus coordinators from the participating community colleges. These coordinators serve as liaisons to their colleges; most also have taught in ET. The community colleges are responsible for identifying qualified students, processing their applications, and providing coordinators and faculty to teach in the sessions and serve on the steering committee. The role of the campus coordinators is to involve the college's faculty and counselors in recruiting qualified students and then helping the students through the application process. The coordinators also encourage faculty to volunteer for the summer teaching assignments, selecting teachers with the skills and disciplines that fit the program's needs.

Since 1988, Vassar's Tom McGlinchey has been overall program coordinator and, in the words of one faculty member, the "glue" that holds ET together. As coordinator, he oversees the segments of ET that involve Vassar services and facilities. He also continues to wear the hat of academic counselor during the session, as he has from ET's first summer.

Until 1996, formal responsibility for the program was somewhat unclear. Vassar viewed the project as an equal partnership between it and the community colleges but took responsibility for ET's funding. Over time, though, it became clear that the community colleges would not be able to support Exploring Transfer from their public funds. In 1992, Vassar administrators decided that the best avenue to long-term stability would be to give Exploring Transfer status as a regular program of Vassar College. This led to Vassar adding a sustaining endowment for the program to the goals of its fund-raising "Campaign for Vassar College."

In 1996, the program's structure was reorganized to parallel the regular Vassar program organization. Exploring Transfer now is led by a faculty director, currently Cecilia Macheski, who reports to dean of faculty Norman Fainstein. The program coordinator, Tom McGlinchey, also reports

to the dean. A formally constituted steering committee provides specific policy direction. The committee is chaired by Fainstein and includes the program director, the coordinator, and faculty from the collaborating community colleges and Vassar College.

The multi-institutional committee establishes policy and determines the program's broad curricular areas. It addresses curricular issues such as including a permanent science component, making research activity central to all course offerings, and incorporating computer use in all ET classes. Building on the Vassar faculty's leadership in using technology in their classrooms, original documents for research will be online. With this new feature, ET faculty will be able to see students' writing and thinking as it happens; a whole class can comment on and evaluate a source at one time and see and discuss different points of view.

Looking at the history and evolution of Exploring Transfer, observers remark on the unusual, sustained commitment of its participating colleges and their faculties. Since the program's inception, presidents have changed, yet institutional support from founders LaGuardia and Vassar has never wavered. The other community colleges who joined the collaborative have added to that commitment. At Vassar, president Frances Fergusson has maintained since 1986 the impetus initially provided by Virginia Smith. At LaGuardia, president Raymond Bowen has continued to support the effort originally led by Joseph Shenker. The original sponsor of the program at Vassar, Colton Johnson, has had many additional responsibilities at the college, yet he continues to be an advisor and advocate. Janet Lieberman continues to consult with Johnson on funding and outreach. Many of the original faculty also have remained in leadership roles. At LaGuardia they include John Chaffee, John Henry Davis, John Hyland, Gilbert Muller, and Cecilia Macheski. At Dutchess, faculty leaders include Judy Kohl, Richard Reitano, and Joel Diamond; dean of the faculty Mary Louise Van Winkle is the program's administrative champion.

Program Financing

Until recently, one aspect of Exploring Transfer that unfortunately had remained constant was the scramble for funding to support the program. For its first year, funds came from the Vassar presidential budget, augmented by grants from AAC&U/Mellon and Chase Manhattan Bank. For the second year, new grants came from the Ford Foundation, the C.V. Starr Foundation, Manufacturers Hanover Trust, and the Seth Sprague

Foundation. Chase Manhattan renewed its support that year and continued to make grants each year through 1995. (For a list of donors, see the appendix.) Chief fundraisers were Colton Johnson and members of the Vassar development office, especially Shelley Sherman and Kenneth Cool, who were encouraged in their efforts by President Fergusson.

Each year, the hunt for support continued, with Vassar making up the difference when grant monies did not support the total budget. In 1988, the Ford Foundation made a large grant, which provided planning funds for five replication sites and supported Vassar's Exploring Transfer as the effort's demonstration site. When Vassar decided to add Exploring Transfer in its "Campaign for Vassar College," Johnson again approached the Ford Foundation, this time with a request to help establish an ET endowment. In 1994, the Foundation made a challenge grant of $300,000, for which Vassar had to find other donors to match the grant two-for-one. If the challenge was successful, the resulting $900,000 fund would provide the steady stream of money needed to keep ET on sound financial footing, although additional funds would still be needed to fully support the program.

As the endowment campaign proceeded, the search for annual operating funds still went on. At one point in early 1996, the steering committee considered canceling the session in order to focus on the challenge grant effort. Instead, they found ways to reduce the budget, and again Vassar came up with the funds to carry on. That year, the total budget for the session serving thirty-three students was $82,000, compared with the $60,000 budget for ET's first session in 1985. By the end of 1996, several generous Vassar alumnae/i had responded to the efforts of Colton Johnson and the college's development office, and the Ford Foundation's challenge was met. That endowment now provides Exploring Transfer with a funding base that sustains a substantial portion of its annual operating budget.

chapter
6

Outcomes: Transfer

The most compelling evidence of Exploring Transfer's success is its record number of student transfers. As of September 1996, the program reported 254 ET graduates who had transferred to four-year colleges and universities. The transfer rate for this group is most appropriately calculated against the total number of program graduates through 1994, since those students would have had enough time to return to their community colleges and complete two-year degrees by Fall 1996.

Between 1985 and 1994, 399 students went through the program. ET's 254 transfers thus yield a transfer rate of 64 percent — almost three times the national average of 23 percent (as reported by Cohen 1992) — for a population that includes many students selected expressly because they were not pointing toward transfer.

The Exploring Transfer staff believe that the actual number of transfers is even higher. Community college students typically live mobile lifestyles, which makes tracking their educational progress difficult once the students leave a particular institution. Such students tend to be moving targets, and colleges seldom have adequate resources to follow them. Exploring Transfer is no exception. Always short of money and time, its program staff have concentrated on the new students at hand and have allocated few resources for systematic follow-up. Collecting transfer information is further complicated by differences in how the various institutions involved acquire and report student data.

ET's staff members have begun to create a database of the program's graduates and are adding to it through alumni newsletters, reunion data, surveys of graduates, and personal contacts. These other sources have yielded the following additional data about the 254 ET graduates who have transferred. As of September 1996,

- 97 had earned bachelor's degrees;
- 77 had matriculated at Vassar; of those, 59 had earned degrees there;
- 33 had gone to graduate school; of those, 21 had earned graduate degrees.

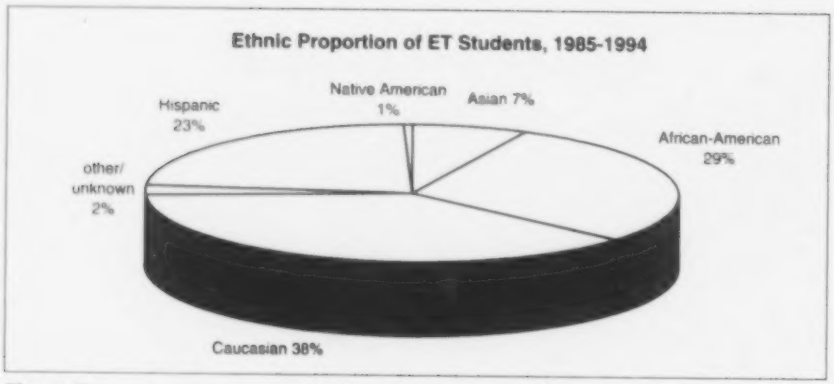

Figure 5

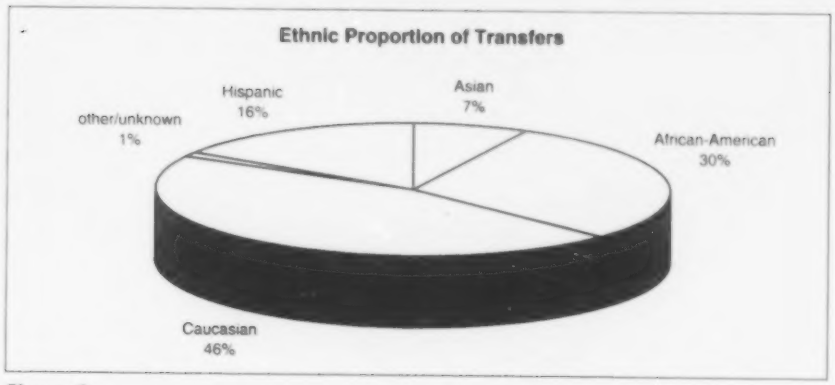

Figure 6

ET graduates have done well at Vassar: Of the first five to enroll, three graduated Phi Beta Kappa and two received honors in their majors.

The transfer rate of students of color was consistent with their representation in the program as a whole, with the exception of Hispanic students. Of the 399 ET graduates between 1985 and 1994, 7 percent were Asian, 29 percent were African-American, 23 percent were Hispanic, 38 percent were white, fewer than 1 percent were Native American, and 2 percent were classified as "other" or "unknown" (see figure 5). By comparison, among the 254 graduates known to have transferred, 7 percent were Asian, 30 percent were African-American, 16 percent were Hispanic, 46 percent were white, and 1 percent were "other" or of "unknown" race (see figure 6).

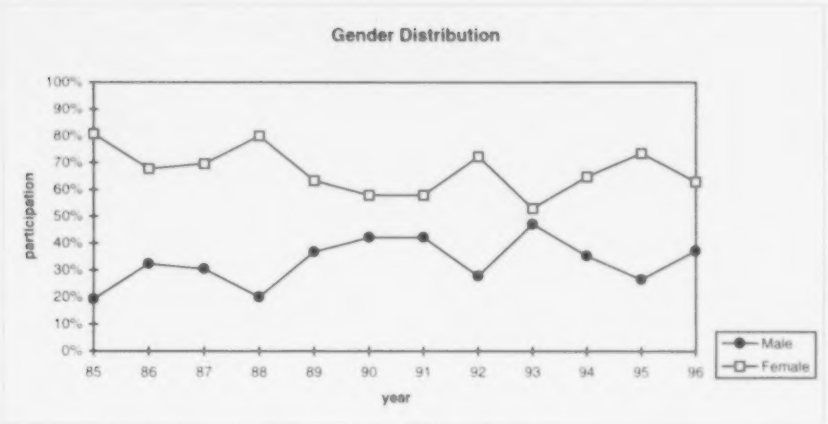

Figure 7

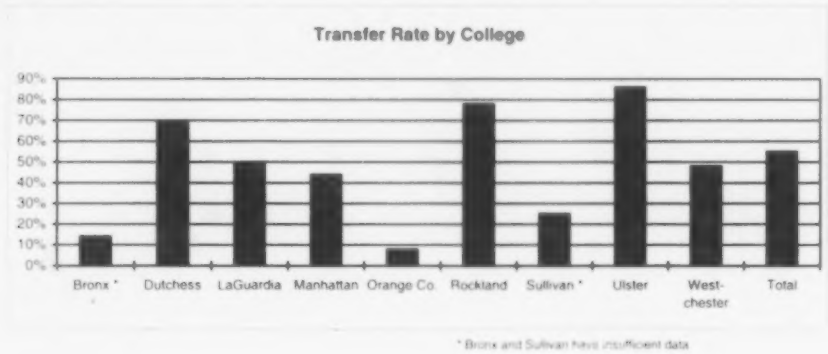

Figure 8

Further examination of the transfer data shows a higher proportion of women transferring than men (see figure 7). Transfer rates also appear significantly higher among students from Dutchess, Rockland, and Ulster (see figure 8). This pattern parallels the differences in the demographics between these upstate community colleges and the urban institutions such as LaGuardia. However, the disparity may also be a function of difficulties in tracking community college students: ET staff at Vassar report that information is more readily gathered about students in the institutions nearby.

impact

Cleon Edwards (ET '87, Vassar '90) went from LaGuardia to ET to Vassar, where he was president of the Black Student Union. His first job after graduating was for the borough president of Manhattan, David Dinkins. When Dinkins became mayor, Edwards worked in the mayor's office and then as a policy analyst in the public advocate's office. He is now communications director for the nonprofit organization West Harlem Environmental Action.

Edwards sees ET as an innovative environment that provides opportunities for capable nontraditional students to measure their capacities to succeed at schools such as Vassar. He was impressed by the older ET students, who brought personal perspectives from their own life experiences into the classroom.

LaGuardia's individual data complement the overall program figures and demonstrate results for an urban, multiethnic population. Of the 191 LaGuardia students who participated in ET between 1985 and 1996:

- 111 students, or 58 percent, had transferred to four-year institutions.

Of those 111 students:

- 66 had received bachelor's degrees;
- 8 had earned graduate degrees, and 6 more were making progress as of September 1996;
- 22 had graduated from Vassar;
- 55 had enrolled at some branch of the City University of New York, 4 at SUNY colleges, and 6 at New York University. Others went on to schools such as Middlebury and Yale.

Data for all LaGuardia students — not just those from Exploring Transfer — suggest that the program has had campuswide influence. In the ten years between ET's birth in 1985 and 1994, overall transfers from LaGuardia to baccalaureate institutions increased 10 percent.

As important as the numbers is ET's broader impact on its participants. It is difficult to measure awakening, transformation, expanded capacity, and self-knowledge. But ET certainly is meeting its goal of promoting transfer among community college students, particularly students of color, and of encouraging them to pursue liberal arts degrees.

Furthermore, this goal was accomplished at a cost of less than $2,500 per student, based on ET's 1996 budget. Couple these data with the stories of how individual lives have been changed by ET. All those involved — ET's faculty, its administrators, and its funders — consider Exploring Transfer well worth the effort and the cost.

chapter
7

Reaching Out: Sharing the Model

In 1988, after three years of experience with Exploring Transfer's positive effects on students and faculty in New York, program leaders at Vassar asked the Ford Foundation to fund a national replication project. The project would foster a small number of similar programs, using Exploring Transfer as a demonstration model. Vassar invited the Association of American Colleges and Universities to join in. Ford funded the proposal; and the AT&T Foundation, Chase Manhattan Bank, and Transamerica gave additional funds.

The first step they took was a national conference on community college transfer, held at Vassar in October 1988 and supported by the American Association of Community Colleges (then the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges) and the American Council on Education. Sixty presidents, provosts, deans, other administrators, and faculty from more than forty liberal arts and community colleges attended.

The conference examined the importance of transfer and the opportunities and problems involved in new transfer initiatives. ET's students, faculty, and administrators explained the specifics of the Vassar program. They described how a holistic learning community and the challenge of the liberal arts opened new horizons for community college students and motivated them to transfer to four-year colleges.

At the end of the conference, AAC&U member colleges were invited to submit replication proposals for a collaborative transfer project of their own, based on the Exploring Transfer model. Their task was to design a residential summer program on the senior college's campus in partnership with one or more community colleges. The program's curriculum would consist of team-taught courses that two- and four-year colleges would accept as meeting degree requirements. Projects would take advantage of the residential nature of the four-year college and would emphasize support services, counseling, and mentorship.

The best proposals would each receive a $25,000 planning grant to develop "creative local adaptations" of Exploring Transfer. Partner teams would visit ET at Vassar to observe the program in operation. In addition, a core of ET veterans — students, faculty, and administrators — would assist the partners in designing their own programs. The partners would need to seek additional funding for full implementation of their plans.

In February 1989, the replication review panel chose five proposals. Each of the panel's choices "demonstrated commitment to transfer,... offered a concrete, comprehensive program to attract new constituencies ... [and] saw the program as a service to the higher education community, rather than as a recruitment vehicle to the four-year college" (Wechsler 1991: 16). The selection panel also examined the proposals for evidence that the partners would be able to raise the additional funds — an indication that the program would continue beyond the term of the planning grant.

The teams selected to receive the planning grants were Agnes Scott College, with Atlanta Metropolitan College and DeKalb College; Bucknell University, with the Community College of Philadelphia; Hamilton College, with Mohawk Valley and Onondaga Community Colleges and SUNY College of Agriculture and Technology at Morrisville; Lewis and Clark College, with Portland Community College; and Smith College, with Capital Community-Technical College (then called Greater Hartford Community College). Geographically diverse, the partnerships also matched colleges with diverse missions and styles.

The summer of 1990 saw the first sessions of the replication projects. For two of them, Hamilton and Lewis and Clark, the first sessions were also their last. A third project, Agnes Scott, ended after two years. But the programs at Bucknell and Smith continue to thrive. Each of the five partnerships stayed very close to the Exploring Transfer format. Each described the first session as a success, albeit acknowledging problems that needed to be addressed for the future. Yet two continued and three did not. Why?

The Survivors: Bucknell University

Then presidents Gary Sojka of Bucknell University and Judith Eaton of the Community College of Philadelphia (CCP) had been part of a team attending the Vassar conference; others on that team included Thomas Greaves, then Bucknell's provost and now a professor of anthropology, and Aram Terzian, professor of sociology at CCP. Greaves recalls that speakers at the conference did not bill ET as a recruiting device for senior

colleges, but instead emphasized the educational *pro bono* and faculty-development aspects. Vassar faculty had described the mind-expanding experience of teaching students who possessed broader life experiences than the traditional liberal arts college student. Foundation officers had challenged institutions to collaborate on removing barriers to transfer, especially for students of color. Greaves and Terzian thought their institutions would commit to a partnership for removing the barriers and had put together their winning proposal with that purpose in mind.

Bucknell University, Lewisburg, Pennsylvania.

In the summer of 1990, following fifteen months of work by the Bucknell-CCP planners, their program opened — Student Transfer Enrichment Program, or STEP. Richard Smith, now retired from the Bucknell English department, was the program's founding director, and he strongly influenced its development. Smith says that the Bucknell faculty were interested in the program from the beginning: thirty-three of them responded to the first invitation to become involved.

From the administrative side, another important proponent at Bucknell was Larry Shinn, then vice president for academic affairs, later president of Berea College. When the Ford Foundation funding ended, he saw to it that STEP was incorporated in the regular university budget. When questions were raised about whether STEP was an appropriate expenditure of university funds, he clearly expressed to parents and trustees the educational value of a diverse student population.

Like Vassar's Exploring Transfer, STEP brings together two very different institutions. Bucknell is a selective, private university located in the small city of Lewisburg, Pennsylvania. The university offers its 3,500 students small classes, faculty dedicated to research and scholarship as well as teaching, an emphasis on professional and liberal arts degrees, and strong student support services. Ninety percent of Bucknell's students, including students of color, complete the baccalaureate degree.

Tom Greaves describes the Community College of Philadelphia as "a wonderful place, a valiant and exciting institution. It serves a local urban population that is unable to go away and needs inexpensive education. It was a path-breaking decision for them to tie in with a private institution with dramatically different students and curriculum." CCP offers a liberal

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impact

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Shelley Dabne (STEP '93, Bucknell '96) was married and had been out of school for twenty-two years when she decided to go back to school at the Community College of Philadelphia. After two semesters there, she applied to Bucknell University's STEP. After attending the program, she returned to CCP to complete her associate of arts degree. She transferred to Bucknell, graduating in 1996 with financial support from grants, work study, and student loans.

Dabne majored in educational research, plans to spend two years in the Teach America program, and expects to go to graduate school eventually. For her senior thesis, she surveyed STEP students and faculty. She recorded both praise and criticism, but she says, "From all the student surveys, three words stand out: *opportunity, inspiration,* and *motivation.*"

arts core curriculum as well as occupational programs. Typical of community colleges, its faculty are often overworked, which gives them little time for research in their disciplines. Its students come from the poor, urban neighborhoods of Philadelphia. About two-thirds are minorities; many are single parents, often on public assistance. Because few can afford to attend full-time, those who complete a degree usually take four or five years to do so.

STEP selects twenty to twenty-five CCP students to go to the green countryside of Lewisburg, 150 miles away. There they live in a college dormitory and focus on learning for six weeks. They choose two of the three courses offered. A team pairing one faculty member from Bucknell and one from CCP teaches each course. Bucknell students, many of them STEP graduates, serve as peer counselors for each course, living in the dormitory with STEP's students and providing academic support and personal counseling.

Each session offers one social science course, one course combining math and science, and one humanities course that pairs English and psychology teachers. Students completing the session earn six Bucknell credits. Faculty design the courses especially for STEP, but they meet Bucknell's demanding standards. Reading and writing requirements are stringent, and most students need and receive assistance with their writing. Discussion is serious — not just rapping. Class size averages sixteen or seventeen. Not only is STEP free to its students, but they receive a weekly stipend. In other respects, it reflects the basic elements of the Exploring Transfer model.

Students are chosen because they show promise, and some are clearly already on their way. More often, however, they are "diamonds in the rough," showing high potential but unaware of their capabilities and how to expand them. Recruiting is done by word of mouth, by faculty and counselors and by STEP graduates who return to complete their community college degrees. The enrollment target is a 50-50 balance between white students and those of color.

Students and faculty come away from STEP echoing the reactions of

Exploring Transfer's participants. Students discover that they are capable of high-quality academic work and expand their sense of the options available to them. In a thoughtful paper on the program, current codirector Ernest Keen (1991) says,

> *Breaking through old habits and inventing new ones is a liberating and empowering experience that verifies what [students] have been told in being selected for the program in the first place, namely, that they can do academic work of high quality. Concretely, this means that this experience ... usually carries over into subsequent courses, first in students' return to a community college setting and later in their transfer to liberal arts institutions. (11)*

Faculty are challenged by these diamonds in the rough and by working with colleagues from a different sector. They thrive on the opportunity to design their own courses, and Keen considers their work stellar. He calls the teaching teams "arranged marriages," and cautions that a good match is a complex construct. When it works, both partners grow in the process, teaching and learning from each other, "restructur[ing] their own intellectual lives in the process of working in the program."

The institutions too have been changed by their involvement with STEP. At CCP, there is new recognition that its students are capable of baccalaureate study, and that faculty must play a major role in encouraging transfer. It is proud of its connection with Bucknell and its faculty is stimulated, as is the Bucknell faculty, by the challenge of these students and the team-teaching process.

The initial impetus for the project was a combination of altruism — reducing the barriers to transfer for nontraditional students — and interest in faculty development. Over the years, however, Bucknell has come to view STEP also as a means of recruiting minority students. By the end of the first session, STEP's students all wanted to enroll at Bucknell. Because the university, like others of its class, was seeking to increase its diversity, their interest presented an exciting opportunity. It also brought challenges. To come to Bucknell, these students would need full financial support. Many of them had children to support; they needed housing, day care, and medical benefits. Addressing these needs would require Bucknell to revise its mindset, but the university wanted to meet the challenge, and students were interested in working with its administrators and faculty to help. Solutions included reserving some space for STEP graduates who had fam-

ilies in Bucknell's transitional housing for new faculty. The university also helped arrange to transfer welfare support from Philadelphia to Lewisburg for single mothers receiving Aid to Dependent Children.

Like their counterparts at Vassar, STEP students who enroll at Bucknell bring a welcome vitality to campus, drawing attention to the benefit of nontraditional students in the classroom and beyond. For example, in their first year at Bucknell, STEP graduates became an informal support group for one another. They had the idea of organizing more formally, but they did not want to be marked as different because they were from STEP. The answer was a support group for all Bucknell's transfer students — CEO, for Continuing Education Organization, now an activity recognized by the student government.

As a means of reducing barriers to transfer, Bucknell's STEP program, like the Vassar model it emulates, clearly is successful. From the first five STEP cohorts, twenty-two students eventually transferred to Bucknell; thirteen have earned degrees, seven are still in school, and two have dropped out. Other STEP graduates have gone on to the University of Pennsylvania, Temple, Rutgers, Lincoln College, Beaver College, and Rhode Island School of Design. Seventy-five percent of STEP's students either are attending college or have graduated.

Today, STEP's codirectors are Ernest Keen, a psychology professor at Bucknell, and William Baker, an English professor from CCP. Keen has been with the program from the beginning, Baker since 1992. They are deeply committed to it and provide the energy and stability that keep it going. Besides directing the program, they teach the humanities course together. Baker says, "The teaching is a joy, more than worthwhile personally and in the effect on students." Keen finds in STEP "the most exciting teaching I do."

Their institutions recently changed leadership, but Keen and Baker made a convincing case for STEP with the new presidents — Fred Capshaw at CCP and William Adams at Bucknell. Both presidents recognize the program's value. Since the Ford Foundation's planning grant ended, Bucknell has absorbed STEP's $70,000 annual cost. Despite the always tight budget of his publicly funded college, in 1996 Capshaw budgeted a $10,000 contribution from CCP to help defray program costs. The partners also are seeking support from local corporations, although the climate for such support is less favorable than in the 1980s when Exploring Transfer began.

The financial imbalance between the two institutions matches the dif-

77

ference in their status in the higher education hierarchy. Keen says that "Bucknell people and CCP people all try to ignore the hierarchical assignments they find themselves in." This is a continuing challenge, but STEP's participants clearly recognize the importance of equal partnership and a common will to maintain it.

The continuing success of STEP demonstrates the power of the model. It also highlights other factors essential to the success of this innovation. Key ingredients include commitment from the top, strong and enduring faculty leadership, focus on students and responding to their needs, flexibility, and equality in the partnership.

The Survivors: Smith College

The first-year report on Smith College's collaboration with Capital Community-Technical College — they call the program Community College Connections, or CCC — established both the program's relationship to Exploring Transfer and its salient differences:

> *When we created Community College Connections, following the Vassar model, our primary goal was to enable the students to experience through hard work their ability to achieve in a four-year, residential, liberal arts environment. We had added to that goal two more that are distinctly related to Smith ... namely: to have this group of students experience the benefits of a women's college; [and] to create a multicultural program in which a majority of the students were students of color and in which the curriculum included American cultures that have historically been absent from the traditional liberal arts curriculum or marginalized within it. (Schuster 1990: 1)*

Like Vassar, Smith College is one of the Seven Sisters, institutions seen as the female counterparts to the male Ivy League. Unlike Vassar and most of its peers that became coed, Smith remains a women's college. Its 2,670 students are largely young, white, middle class, and from the top 20 percent of their high school classes.

For its AAC&U/Vassar grant application in 1988, Smith chose as its two-year college partner Capital Community-Technical College (CCTC), because it was urban, had a high proportion of minority students, and few of its students transferred to Smith. To attend the program, students would be moving from their homes in Connecticut's capital city, Hartford, to Northampton, a small, progressive community of 30,000 in western

Massachusetts. They would take courses of the same rigor as those offered at Vassar and Bucknell, meeting Smith's equally high standards.

The goals of the replication project fit neatly with those expressed in Smith College's "Design for Institutional Diversity," published in 1989, which

> *[called] upon the entire Smith community to reaffirm its common bond — the commitment to quality education — by embracing two interrelated goals: creating a more inclusive and culturally diverse community and overcoming the subtle racism of the 1980s while maintaining our standards of excellence.*

A planning team composed mainly of administrators from Smith and CCTC assembled to prepare the proposal. Out of that group, Marilyn Schuster, associate dean of the faculty at Smith, and Leo Barrington, then CCTC's academic dean, became project directors, and Don Reutener, a Smith psychology professor, became faculty director.

The three directors decided to have faculty make their own team-teaching matches, and they invited outstanding faculty from both colleges to an informational meeting about the project. At Smith, invitations went only to tenured faculty, since the time commitment demanded for the program would be likely to interfere with the research and writing required of junior faculty. At the first meeting, twelve teachers expressed strong interest. At a subsequent meeting of this smaller group, three Smith-CCTC teams coalesced to come up with interdisciplinary courses for the first session. They were "Movements of the Sixties," taught by Sam Goldberger of CCTC and Tom Riddell of Smith; "Boundaries: Exploration of Self and Community in Fiction, Poetry, and Essays," Evelyn Farber, CCTC, and Vicky Spelman, Smith; and "Hard Choices in Health Care: Ethics, Economics, and Politics," Randy Bartlett, Smith, and Marsha Garfinkel, CCTC.

Befitting the project's third goal, each of the courses raised multicultural issues in one way or another. (This would precipitate a remarkable confrontation by students near the end of the session, one that demonstrated vividly the power of this kind of learning.)

The courses were approved by the appropriate bodies at each college. They emphasized oral, writing, and mathematics skills. Course material required students to apply these skills to relevant issues. Each student would take two of the three courses and receive six credits for successful completion. Smith would accept these as transfer credits and provide transcripts to facilitate transfer to other colleges.

Because Smith is not coed, Community College Connections was for women only, but otherwise its criteria for selecting students matched those articulated at the beginning of Exploring Transfer at Vassar. The admissions committee looked for CCTC women who were most likely to benefit from the program. Ideally, they were students who did not have baccalaureate study in their family backgrounds, had probably not thought of themselves as going on to a four-year college, and would probably not have been considered by Smith for admission under other circumstances. CCTC's faculty were asked to recommend candidates with strong academic potential and good writing skills, preferably having completed one year of a two-year degree program. The intent was to include white students, but to select mostly students of color.

The program's planners settled on an enrollment of twenty-five students, smaller than Exploring Transfer's thirty-five. CCTC's faculty and counselors identified students who fit the criteria, and fifty of them submitted complete applications. A twelve-member admissions committee — three administrators from each college and the six teaching faculty — made the final selections. They chose seventeen students of color and eight white students; median age of the cohort was 23.

Keeping in mind the project goal of having students experience the benefits of a women's college, the planners had agreed that the students would live together in one of Smith's resident houses, Washburn House. They would be responsible for running the house along with two Smith administrators, who served as residence directors. Three Smith students served as peer assistants, one for each of the courses offered, in much the same way as Vassar's peer counselors, helping both students and faculty, organizing study groups, and working closely with the residence directors.

Academic support for the students came from Smith College's Center for Academic Development. Four Center staff members helped students with their writing and quantitative skills and gave workshops on study skills. Once CCC's students understood that most Smith students used the Center, that they weren't being patronized by a remedial program set up expressly for them, they found this a valuable service. Other forms of support included subsidies for transportation and child care, which were necessary to attract the many CCTC students who were mothers. All aspects of the program itself, including housing, books, and supplies, were free to the students.

Early in the planning stage, John Risley, of the Smith development office, Conrad Mallett, then CCTC's president, and the three directors began

seeking sources of funds to augment the $25,000 planning grant. They decided to approach Hartford's corporations and foundations, which might support the program because of its benefit to the community. The Aetna Foundation contributed $15,000, and smaller grants came from Manufacturers Hanover Foundation and the Hartford Foundation. Available funds from previous grants with compatible purposes from GTE and the Charles A. Dana Foundation brought the total to $64,000. This left a deficit of more than $17,000 in the actual costs of the program, not counting in-kind contributions from the colleges. A significant in-kind gift to the project came from the instructors and the faculty director, who planned the courses and program on their own time. Smith provided facilities, library services, and program administration.

As at all the replication sites, overall reaction to the first summer session from students and faculty was enthusiastic and grateful. To reach that stage, though, Smith College's program had to first survive a crisis point toward the end of its session. Over the weeks, some students, mostly white, had become increasingly uncomfortable with what they saw as the pervasiveness of race as a topic in the coursework and ultimately in Washburn House life as well. Intense emotions culminated in the students calling for a meeting of all program faculty, staff, and students. Prepared for an explosion, faculty and staff instead found themselves experiencing what Smith's Marilyn Schuster described as "an expression of student leadership and community that realized the goals we had set for the program more eloquently than we could have ever hoped for."

The students had chosen three of their peers to lead the meeting: one white, one African-American, and one Hispanic. They began by inviting everyone to congratulate themselves and their neighbors for their hard work and accomplishments. They presented a paper they had written setting out their observations, and then initiated a discussion in which everyone had a chance to speak. Students openly shared their feelings about the program, especially its racial tensions. White students described their discomfort at what they saw as an emphasis on racism and division. Students of color expressed — some eloquently and some haltingly — how important it was for them to study their own cultures in an academic setting for the first time in their lives. The differences did not all disappear, but everyone heard one another with respect and affection. The faculty and staff were moved by the way the students, independently and through long late-night discussions, had reached this level in handling extremely emotional

issues with care, understanding, and integrity.

Since that first year, the goals of the program have remained the same, even as an unusual mix of community colleges has joined the original Smith-CCTC partnership, adding further dimensions to its multicultural aspect. These new institutions are Springfield Technical Community College, in Massachusetts; Florida's Miami-Dade Community College, which is heavily Hispanic; and two tribal colleges, Sitting Bull, in North Dakota, and the Institute of American Indian and Alaska Native Culture and Arts Development, in New Mexico.

Smith's Don Reutener still directs Community College Connections. In addition to leading the academic program, he also raises funds. With full support from his president, Ruth Simmons, Reutener works closely with the Smith development office to find money. The Aetna Foundation has been a consistent source of funds; other assistance has come from Merrill Lynch and the Teagle Foundation. A GTE Focus Grant and the Howard Hughes Medical Institute provide funds for participation of the tribal colleges. Still, Reutener says, the program "hangs on by its fingernails." It is totally supported by soft money, much of which must be found anew each year. Program costs are now about $100,000 annually. Capital Community-Technical College helps to raise funds in Connecticut, and Springfield Technical Community College brings in some contributions.

In addition to support services from the Center for Academic Development, special features of CCC now include workshops on computing, financial aid, and college opportunities. The workshops are designed to help its students in planning for transfer and making the transition to a baccalaureate institution when they do. Reutener also invites Smith faculty and administrators and Northampton residents to informal CCC luncheons or dinners to talk about their careers. The students have a

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Lilliam Martinez (CCC '90, Smith '94) did not like high school and did not do well there. Her counselor suggested she could drop out at 16, as other members of her family had done. Nevertheless, she graduated. She did want to go to college, but she thought she wasn't smart enough for the SAT and knew nothing about financial aid. So she went to work to help her mother: "That's what we all did." She worked up to a manager's position but still thought about college; she enrolled in Capital Community-Technical College when she learned the college didn't require SAT scores. Still, she was discouraged by restrictive personal relationships and the need to work full-time. Even finishing an associate's degree was a struggle; she never expected to go further.

Being tapped for the Smith College program opened a different world for Martinez. Having overcome serious personal problems herself, she became a leader in counseling her peers and helping to resolve the conflicts that arose during the first session of the Community College Connections program. She went on to graduate from Smith with a psychology degree, then returned to Capital as a minority fellow, teaching classes in her field. Her goal now is to teach in the community college, and she is determined to earn a doctorate.

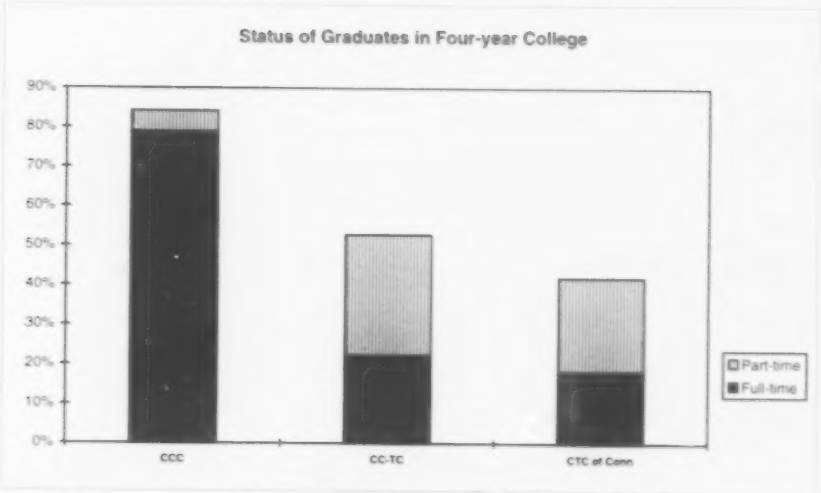

Figure 9

chance to see role models and learn about career opportunities they might otherwise not have considered.

That first session has not been the only one to see tensions reach a high point, triggered by the demands of the program. Leo Barrington had suggested in the early planning stages that the students would be challenged more by the amount and intensity of the work than by the difficulty of its content. Peer assistants — program graduates now studying at Smith — help CCC's students with academics and adjustment to the new rigor, but somewhere near the middle of the session tensions seem to come to a head. The phenomenon sometimes occurs at Vassar too, and it relates not only to the demands of the curriculum but also to the emotional intensity of the residential experience. This intensity is heightened at Smith because the CCC students also must interact in managing the affairs of Washburn House. But the benefits include skills and confidence the women acquire as they work through the challenges of living together. The living arrangement has intellectual advantages too, because house conversations expand the learning, as everyone in the house becomes involved in issues from all three of the courses.

True to the pattern seen with Exploring Transfer, CCC's participants

say the experience has changed their lives. They value the total immersion in a community whose primary purpose is academic and intellectual excellence. For the five weeks of Community College Connections, their lives are not fragmented by jobs, commuting, child care, and family problems. One student's comment reflects the feelings of her peers: "This is the most exciting and challenging experience I've ever been in."

Reutener has maintained a strong follow-up system, and he has found that about 80 percent of CCC students who earn an associate of arts degree transfer to four-year colleges. Most finish their associate of arts degrees in the year following CCC and then transfer immediately. All of those transfers either have graduated or are still working on degrees. Reutener has compared CCC's results with figures for all Connecticut community colleges (an 18 percent transfer rate) and for all students from Capital Community-Technical College (22 percent). (See figure 9.)

Faculty view teaching in CCC as a privilege. Evelyn Farber of CCTC wrote after the first session,

> *The project called on more emotional and intellectual energy than I had expected to give it or can now completely account for. But the satisfactions expanded in proportion. I'm grateful to have been part of this remarkable little community, can already see that the five weeks have been permanently useful to me as both teacher and student, and am eager to see future CCC participants follow up on what we've learned while unveiling their own surprises. (in Schuster 1990: 5)*

Like STEP at Bucknell, Smith College's CCC program produces outcomes matching those of Exploring Transfer. Students are awakened to their promise and possibilities; faculty are energized and renewed; institutions recognize the academic talent of the nontraditional student. By making multicultural education an explicit aspect of the program, CCC particularly emphasizes how central this kind of education is for these students, regardless of their ethnicity. A special feature of CCC is the opportunity it gives women to realize their power to create an intellectual and emotional community. A second unusual aspect is the successful integration of students from far-flung and very disparate community colleges.

The Discontinued: Agnes Scott College

Of the three other projects funded in the AAC&U/Vassar project, only Agnes Scott College's continued for a second year. Agnes Scott, a women's

college in the Atlanta suburb of Decatur, partnered with Atlanta Metropolitan and DeKalb Community College. Its program was called Investigating Transfer, and was open to both men and women, although the great majority of applicants were women. Its first session enrolled nineteen women and six men; fifteen students were African-American or African and ten were white. The youngest was 17, the oldest 65.

The report (Wistrand 1990) on the first session begins with these words from one of the peer counselors:

> *The 1990 Agnes Scott Investigating Transfer Program was, without a doubt, a success. The hallmarks of the Vassar Program, i.e., the students' dedication to their work, their questioning of previously sacrosanct decisions and life choices, the faculty's interaction with each other and with the students, and the sense of community that bonded the academic to the dorm life, were all clearly present. (1)*

A statement from one of the student evaluations helps make the point:

> *Thank you for giving me one of the most enriching experiences of my life. Not only did I make many new friends, I learned a great deal about our differences; I also learned that these differences need not be threatening. Academically, this has been the most rewarding and challenging five weeks of my life! (1)*

Harry Wistrand, then associate dean of the college and now head of the biology department, directed the program for the first year. He notes that Agnes Scott differs from Vassar in being located in an urban area, Atlanta. Its partner colleges, and their students, are also in Atlanta. It was difficult to reconcile some students to the requirement that they live on campus, but the college was firm that the residential character was integral to the experience. Most students went home on the weekends, however.

Agnes Scott is a women's college, but the Investigating Transfer program was open to men as well. This meant establishing the college's first coeducational dormitory, which administrators dealt with by imposing a rigid set of dorm rules. The rules broke down under pressure from the program's students; but, with flexibility on the part of program officers, the problems were ironed out.

In other respects, the program followed the Exploring Transfer model. The first year's interdisciplinary courses were "Technology, Human Values, and Public Policy: Genetic Engineering"; "Cross-Cultural Connections"; and

"Elementary Discrete Mathematics." Twenty-two of the program's twenty-five participants enrolled in "Cross-Cultural Connections." According to the end-of-session report, this course

> *was a "happening," and students learned not only about culture from an academic standpoint, but something about themselves and others in the class (and dormitory) as well. This course became the core of the program and sometimes the students who were not enrolled (and counselors) sat in on the class.... [It prompted] many long discussions in the residence hall. (Wistrand 1990: 4)*

A high point of the first session came when students, counselors, and some faculty heard Nelson Mandela speak in Atlanta. Again from the report:

> *This very moving episode with the tears and power salutes from all of the students probably contributed greatly to the bonding. (4)*

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Sue Nissman (ET '86, Vassar '89) enrolled in Dutchess Community College a number of years after leaving high school in New York City. A Dutchess faculty member says she was perhaps the brightest student he ever had. She graduated Phi Beta Kappa from Vassar and went on to graduate school at M.I.T. In the report of the first session of Agnes Scott College's Investigating Transfer, the director wrote:

> ***If there is one person to whom a "Most Valuable Player" award could be given, none in the program would disagree that it should be Sue Nissman. Sue was a participant in the Vassar program as a student and counselor and graduated from Vassar. Her counsel and direction were invaluable in guiding and maintaining our program. There were many things about our program that carried Sue's imprint, and she had more determination than any of us to be certain that this program would succeed.***

In addition to the $25,000 planning funds, each AAC&U/Vassar grant also provided a counselor from Exploring Transfer. For Agnes Scott, this was Sue Nissman, a graduate of ET and Vassar, who was a valued addition to the project staff. She was able to provide advice based on her experience in the Vassar program to assist in the adjustment process for students.

So what happened to Investigating Transfer? Founding director Harry Wistrand says the program's termination was not due to lack of enthusiasm about its results. Faculty, students, and administrators viewed it as highly valuable for the two years it was funded through the AAC&U/Vassar grant. The college applied for grants to continue after the second year, but its proposals were not funded, and the college decided it could not support the program from its general fund. Then, too, just as the second session began, Wistrand left his administrative post to chair the biology department and so was no longer in a position to advocate for the program. Now Agnes Scott has a new president and is on better financial footing. Wistrand continues to keep the concept alive and believes the college might revive

the program in some form.

One lasting legacy of the partnership is the good relationship Agnes Scott still enjoys with its community college partners. It encourages students to transfer by awarding two $8,000 scholarships each year for students transferring from DeKalb Community College. Another source of financial support for transfer students is its policy of matching the state's Hope Scholarships. Supported by the Georgia state lottery, these scholarships provide tuition grants of up to $4,000 to residents who graduate from high school with a B average and attend independent or public colleges in the state. Agnes Scott matches these grants for transfer students and for students entering directly from high school.

Assessments of Investigating Transfer reinforce the validity of the Exploring Transfer model. The program's demise also underscores two ingredients key to sustaining such programs: adequate funding and advocacy by decision makers.

The Discontinued: Hamilton College

The ET replication project at Hamilton College — Summer Transfer Exploratory Program — shared the acronym STEP with the program at Bucknell University. Hamilton's partners were Mohawk Valley and Onondaga Community Colleges and SUNY College of Agriculture and Technology at Morrisville. Hamilton is a selective liberal arts college of 1,600 students, mostly white and privileged. They come to the rural, central New York community of Clinton from all over the United States.

The AAC&U/Vassar grant project met Hamilton's interest in enrolling more students of color to increase social and economic diversity on the campus, so it chose partners with large minority populations. Mohawk Valley, in Utica, and Onondaga, in Syracuse, each has a student population of 7,000 with a large proportion of students of color. SUNY Morrisville is a two-year campus serving a large number of students from New York City.

Administrators from Hamilton and the two-year colleges selected the faculty teams, inviting one member from each of the two-year schools to partner with three Hamilton faculty members. In recruiting students, the community colleges looked for those with intellectual curiosity and academic performances showing they could succeed, but whose expectations did not include transfer, especially to a liberal arts college. As Eugene Tobin, then dean of faculty and now Hamilton's president, says, "We hoped this would be a life-changing experience and open new horizons for the students."

But Hamilton's STEP ran into difficulties in recruiting an adequate pool of applicants. STEP's program coordinator, Richard Warner, reports,

> *As a result of the small number of applicants ... our student selection process involved many risks.... A few [applicants] were recently reformed substance abusers.... Many had suffered the abuses of poverty and dysfunctional families. Among our acceptances were four single parents with children and two [married] mothers with children. Program planners arranged for housing and child care to accommodate the needs of the seven children whose parents were accepted in the program. (1990:4)*

Of the twenty-seven students accepted, two dropped out before the session, and three more dropped out by the end of the second week. The remaining twenty-two stayed the course, although two left the campus and finished their coursework at home. Among those who finished, the sense of achievement and gratitude was comparable with that engendered by the other programs. Describing her first week on campus, a 37-year-old single mother of two children said, "I felt like Cinderella." Like Cinderella, many did not want to leave the ball. There was high interest in transfer, especially to Hamilton. In Warner's assessment, "For all of our problems, we consider the first year a huge success."

The Hamilton experience reinforces the importance of the student selection process and the principle LaGuardia president Joseph Shenker articulated at the creation of Exploring Transfer: "Don't send them up to fail." Hamilton program staff worked intensely to help students succeed, enabling most of them to make it through. Students responded by offering to spread the word about the program back on their home campuses to help with recruiting. The experience of Exploring Transfer is that once students from the program return to their community colleges, the number and quality of applicants increase. Thus, Hamilton no doubt would have had a larger pool of qualified students for a second session.

Another key issue is whether or not student parents should be allowed to bring their children. Hamilton made an exceptional commitment to including parents and their children in the program. But other STEP students felt the presence of the children distracted from the program for everyone, and faculty and staff agreed. Other programs that included children in their first years have reached this same conclusion. To receive the full value of the residential experience, students need to be able to con-

centrate in a way that is impossible if children are present.

Like its counterparts, Hamilton's STEP was a revelation for those who stayed with it. According to program coordinator Warner:

> *Students were empowered with the knowledge of other possibilities: other ways of living their lives, other ways of becoming educated, other ways of being. They learned to think critically about themselves and the world around them. They learned that they could think and that they deserved to be taken seriously as persons. (11)*

Warner credited the program's faculty and the many supportive members of the Hamilton College community, including its president and dean of faculty, for STEP's success. His end-of-session report included plans to strengthen the program for the next session, clearly expecting there would be a second year. He did note that funding was a problem because of "tight financial times" for Hamilton.

In any event, the program ended after that first session. Looking back, Hamilton's President Tobin says that the college simply could not sustain STEP's budget of $60,000. He points out that the early 1990s were a difficult period financially for many independent colleges. Faced with difficult budgetary choices and lacking outside funding, Hamilton's administrators felt they could not justify expenditures for programs such as STEP.

Like Agnes Scott College, Hamilton did establish stronger working relationships with its partner colleges as a result of the program. Tobin says STEP modestly increased the visibility of Hamilton on the two-year campuses. Those faculties at least know about Hamilton, and some of them encourage qualified students to consider transferring there.

The Discontinued: Lewis and Clark College

The Community College Transfer program, or CCT, paired two Portland, Oregon, neighbors, Lewis and Clark College and Portland Community College. In most respects, the partnership fit the typical profile: an independent four-year liberal arts college and an urban, publicly supported two-year college. CCT's academic program matched that of the other replication sites as well. Interdisciplinary courses meeting Lewis and Clark standards were developed and taught by teams consisting of faculty members from the two institutions. The student selection process was intended to single out applicants of demonstrated academic ability whose college records suggested they lacked direction and aspirations for baccalaureate study.

Like the other programs, CCT was characterized by intensity. According to its faculty director, Stephen Knox,

> *The students we selected, with few exceptions, turned out to be overachievers; this profile, combined with the high expectations of the faculty, produced an atmosphere charged with energy and excitement, but also, we agree, more stressful than we had anticipated. (1990:1)*

The director, the faculty, and the three resident assistants all worked with the students to enable them to succeed in this high-pressure experience.

Evaluations suggest that for the faculty and most students, the program succeeded in the same dimensions as the other replication projects. Students who began the session lacking confidence in themselves emerged knowing they were bright and capable and holding high expectations of their future. Knox considers the program to have been enormously successful for its faculty. The teaching partners learned from each other's disciplines and from what one Lewis and Clark professor called "thoughtful appraisal" of their work by a colleague.

But there were shortcomings. Among the session's twenty-two participants, one was thoroughly discouraged by the academic rigor and intensity. For many of the students, the value of the residential experience was diminished because they went home on weekends and in some cases during the week. Four students continued to hold down jobs. Even as they regretted the distractions, the students found it difficult to sever their local ties to families and other responsibilities. Other students had trouble adjusting to the different values and lifestyles they experienced living in the dorm.

On the whole, though, faculty, students, and administrators considered CCT's program a success and made thoughtful suggestions for improving a second session. The planners intended to track the members of each year's class and encourage them throughout their academic careers. Unfortunately, two administrative champions of the program left Lewis and Clark for other colleges after that first summer session. Associate dean Dennis Massey was the key administrator, says Knox, because he had "the imagination, the enthusiasm, and the position" to see that the program got launched. Provost Jacquelyn Mattfeld also had been committed to seeing CCT succeed. Without their advocacy, the program ended.

Knox remembers the program's faculty and graduates being greatly disappointed when they learned CCT would not continue. At a reunion of participants, it was clear that they had all taken satisfaction in being pio-

99

neers, believing that the lessons learned in the pilot session would have improved the program for future students. There was a feeling of being let down when they learned there would be no future students.

Lewis and Clark's experience is another instance where the loss of high-level support was critical. For CCT, it was particularly crucial because there had been no counterpart to Dennis Massey at Portland Community College. Individual faculty and deans at Portland were behind the program, but CCT did not have an advocate at the decision-making level.

Due to the program's demise, the intended follow-up did not happen. Knox kept track informally of at least a dozen CCT graduates who went on to upper-division study: Five transferred to Lewis and Clark; more went to Portland State University, a state-supported baccalaureate institution in the city. He believes there would have been more success stories had the program continued.

Replication Lessons

The stories of these five projects reinforce the principles that informed the original Exploring Transfer model. First, they demonstrate the transforming force of combining intense and relevant study of the liberal arts with the powerful effect of the residential college experience. They prove that a pool of untapped talent exists among community college students across the country. And they bear out the value for both students and faculty of team-teaching across disciplinary and institutional lines.

These, then, are essential elements of the model: a challenging liberal studies curriculum; a full residential experience; students with untapped potential; and cross-institutional faculty teams. Certain conditions appear to be critical for nurturing the model: Leaders in the administration and the faculty must be advocates for the program. College personnel need a commitment to increasing the institution's diversity and a willingness to try innovative curriculum and classroom strategies. Presidents and development officers should see the program as integral to outreach efforts as well as a social responsibility; such a stance makes the program attractive for funding appeals to corporations and other contributors. Finally, the climate in the collaborating institutions must be open to the risk of crossing the boundaries between higher education sectors.

With these conditions in place, the model strengthens the power of higher education to develop and expand students' personal and professional horizons.

chapter
8

Transformation: Positive Results and Risks

In its first twelve years, Exploring Transfer proved that a student-centered and faculty-designed program with high expectations and strong support can make a dramatic difference in students' lives. Replications of the model demonstrate that it is transportable. The program opens horizons students never envisioned, making the seemingly inaccessible not only accessible but possible.

Not only students benefit. For faculty, new pedagogical techniques emerge from the cross-sector teaching partnerships; new curricular connections grow from planning interdisciplinary courses. For two- and four-year institutions, recognizing the talents of community college students raises academic expectations and encourages attention to the transfer process. As word of the students' success spreads to other institutions, it begins to transform the stereotype of the community college student and eases their progress on the path to the baccalaureate degree.

Exploring Transfer and its kin benefit the broader community as well, in both economic and social terms. Students who might otherwise have ended their educations at the community college expand their earning power by completing the bachelor's degree. The nation's economy gains from their increased earnings and from their expanded knowledge and capacity. Our society's values of opportunity and equity are served as more people of color and low socioeconomic status move into the ranks of the college educated. The benefits extend into the next generation, by raising the aspirations and expectations of the graduates' children.

These benefits as well as the positive impact of the programs on students, faculty, and institutions argue for wider application of the model by institutions committed to social and educational progress. Their positive outcomes make the programs worth examining to see how the model's key features work together to achieve its goals. But it is equally important to recognize the risks of creating such radical change.

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Penny Parsons (ET '93, Mount Holyoke '96) started at LaGuardia Community College at age 26, then transferred to and graduated from Mount Holyoke. Describing how Exploring Transfer affected her, she writes:

> ***Having attended ET changed my life in so many ways.... I felt at peace and safe there. Coming from the projects, I felt like I was on alert the minute I stepped out my door.... At Vassar I got to drop my guard.... The people helped me grow so much because they respected and appreciated me as a human being.... Once I knew I could do harder work, and do it well, I felt confident that I could do whatever I wanted....***
>
> ***Before I began writing this letter, I asked my daughter how she thought my going to Vassar affected her life. She thought for awhile, then concluded it didn't affect her at all.... I realized she has taken what we've been through for granted, and that's kind of wonderful. I think she believes that every 6-year-old could help their mother read "Hamlet" and recite most of the "To be or not to be" soliloquy. Or that leaving the projects and moving to Amherst ... was a possible quest.... She's spent the night twice in a dorm because her Girl Scout leaders were Mount Holyoke students. After those experiences, she said she wanted to go to Mount Holyoke; now she is saying Spelman, but she knows that she could attend both if she wanted to.***

Positive Results: Students

The student theme from the first Exploring Transfer summer, "If I can do ET, I can do anything," has stayed at the top of the charts ever since. It is the standard remark from students in assessing their experiences at Vassar; it typifies students' reactions at other programs as well. A 1994 graduate who went on to Vassar expanded on the theme: "If I hadn't been in ET, I probably would have transferred but I would always have doubted my ability. Now I don't doubt my ability." A member of an earlier ET class put it this way: "I don't have to sit at the back of the academic bus anymore."

Don Reutener, director of Community College Connections at Smith College, says the most common comment he hears from program graduates is, "This has changed my life." A student from Investigating Transfer at Agnes Scott College wrote, "The volume of work stretched me to the limit, but it has proven to me what I can do."

This new-found confidence grows from the whole experience: first, being chosen as a person of promise, then living and learning in the holistic environment of a fine residential college, and finally not just surviving but thriving in the academic pressure cooker. The result is described this way by a 1992 ET alumna: "The Exploring Transfer Program has molded me into a stronger student, a more confident person, and a more socially aware individual with both the wisdom and the power to make a difference in my life and in the world at large."

The quality of the classroom experience is the foundation of the experience. ET faculty director Cecilia Macheski suggests how this works. Students observe how academic rhetoric operates when people — starting with faculty — disagree, demonstrating how to present divergent points of view. Learning with a team of teachers enables students to see options, to under-

stand different points of view. They recognize that "truth" is open-ended and has multiple perspectives.

In this setting, students become part of the academic conversation. Everyone's opinion is sought and valued. The classroom interaction becomes a dialogue, open-ended but intense, leading to consensus. Ordered discussion teaches students to listen and reduces dogmatic responses. They develop sophistication in employing logical thought, in drawing generalization from particulars. They learn how to support opinion with theoretical backing and research as well as personal example.

ET students and faculty at a Fourth of July barbecue.

Most students come to the program with a concept of truth based on "a case study of one," as a faculty member characterized it. This changes as their intellectual horizons expand beyond the personal. In ET, the classroom atmosphere is one in which people take responsibility for the validity of their ideas. This is a shift from the community college, where students tend to focus on autobiography. As Macheski says, "Two-year classrooms often reflect *Oprah*; the talk show may be the only form of discourse they know."

A more subtle kind of learning occurs in the team-taught classrooms. Students begin to see teaching as a possible and attractive career. They are comfortable enough to ask instructors about academic preparation, job opportunities, and satisfactions. ET has stimulated a number of its graduates to enter the teaching profession.

Immediate and thorough feedback to students from both the Vassar and the community college faculty is an important element of Exploring Transfer's pedagogy. The compressed time frame of the summer session forces faculty to return papers quickly. They annotate the work scrupulously, commenting on thought processes as well as writing, telling students how to improve their next paper. The peer counselors then show students how to incorporate the faculty suggestions. Students apply the advice immediately, since the next paper is due close on the heels of the previous one. The result is improved writing skills, as the immediate and useful feedback interacts with the extensive writing requirements.

The course content also has substantial impact on student performance. Studying issues related to diversity with a diverse group of students and faculty is a critical aspect of the ET learning process. Each summer features one course focused on multicultural issues: the politics of South Africa, American

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Afia Thomas (ET '86, Vassar '90) is from Jamaica and was an accounting major at LaGuardia Community College until she returned from Exploring Transfer. She says, "After ET, I was never the same again. When I went back to LaGuardia, I didn't want to just count numbers any more — I wanted to explore ideas." After completing her associate of arts degree, Thomas transferred to Vassar on a full scholarship, was an ET counselor for three years, and graduated with honors. She went on to work and study at Bank Street College, where she earned a master's degree in special education.

She is now the residential life coordinator for Oakes College of the University of California at Santa Cruz. Summers she teaches at Bard College in the Liberty Partnerships Program of Bank Street College, an environmental science academy for at-risk high school students.

At Santa Cruz, Thomas is creating a special residential wing for transfer students. While her work with students is gratifying, she expresses her essential self through an interrelated and multicultural set of artistic talents. She is a percussionist, visual artist, writer, and poet and has performed throughout the country over the past seven years.

culture, race and ethnicity in urban life, or the Third World and U.S. foreign policy. An ET course called "American Mosaic" offered in 1992 and 1994 used American autobiographies to examine the challenges of living with diversity. One participant said, "'American Mosaic' changed people beyond raising their college sights. It gave them the ability to talk about and deal with topics they would otherwise not be able to discuss except in anger."

The faculty reinforce opportunities to continue the dialogue even in courses where diversity is not an explicit topic. Teachers recognize this as an opportunity for students to come to terms with their role in our society. In his report on ET's 1991 session, then project director Larry Rushing noted, "One student after another, especially ones from the mid-Hudson region, said that living and working in classrooms with others from different races and ethnic groups enriched their learning beyond anything they could have previously imagined." In evaluating the 1992 session, a student wrote, "The first thing that affected me ... was the opportunity to interact with other people who had diverse backgrounds yet the desire to communicate their opinions intellectually. This is something I lack in my everyday life, and at my community college." Another student, who came from Uganda, said, "I wish society could achieve what we achieved in breaking down barriers and learning about the individuality of each person."

At Smith College, the Community College Connections program also offers at least one course each term that addresses diversity. Examples are "Women's Role in the Civil Rights Movement," "Between Worlds: Lives and Societies in Transition," "The American City," and "Giving Voice to Our History." Most of the other CCC courses raise complementary issues, augmenting the opportunity to engage in intellectual discourse about diversity. The crisis point in CCC's first summer and the way students dealt with it, described in Chapter 7, indicate the degree to which such courses gen-

erate intense learning and change. Living together, especially in the close environment of Washburn House, only adds to the emotional and intellectual intensity of the climate for learning.

Along with a vibrant and challenging academic program, the residential setting contributes heavily to the power of the experience. As Tom Greaves of Bucknell says, "[Students] get off the bus and see green lawns and buildings with steeples — it's like they've gone to another planet, not like home at all." The dislocation is a first step toward the changes to come. Greaves notes, "There is some homesickness and fear at first. Then they start putting down roots."

The teaching aspect of the site is explicit in CCC at Smith: That students are jointly responsible for managing the affairs of their campus residence is a deliberate element of the women's college experience. In other respects, CCC's residential setting, like the other programs, relieves students of the multiple responsibilities they normally balance as commuter students. They walk to the classroom or library a few minutes away from their dorm; they do not have to go to work; they are away from the distractions of families and home. All the time and resources needed for learning, including a fine library, enable them to focus solely on their studies.

Very different from their commuter college life, these residential programs keep students in close proximity to one another and the peer counselors, and to faculty as well, so the learning environment extends far beyond the classroom. The vital issues raised in class spill over into interactions with peer counselors, collaboration with study groups, and late-night discussions in the dorms.

One of the welcome surprises for students in such programs is discovering other community college students like themselves, with similar goals and capacities. They gain confidence through teaching and learning from one another. One student, Jason Schulterbrandt, for example, exchanged coaching in biology and ecology for help with his writing from his ET classmates. (Jason went on to earn a bachelor's degree in biology from Vassar and enter a Ph.D. program at the University of California at Berkeley.) The students gain friends too; one CCC student told director Don Reutener, "I've made friends with students I would never have talked to before."

Positive Results: Faculty

At the outset of the Vassar collaboration, Janet Lieberman had predicted to Virginia Smith that the team-teaching would be inspirational for

98

LaGuardia's faculty. Smith replied, "I have a feeling that the program may benefit Vassar faculty as much as LaGuardia instructors." In accepting the 1989 Dana Award for Pioneering Achievement in Higher Education for his founding work on Exploring Transfer, Colton Johnson described ET's effect on the Vassar faculty: "Those who had taught in ET were delighted to instruct students who were never absent and always prepared. The senior college instructors thoroughly enjoyed the ... seriousness and expectation that the two-year student brings to the classroom."

Where the replications survive, the same enthusiasm prevails among senior college faculty who participate. Smith's Don Reutener, who not only directs CCC but team-teaches a course in each session, says simply, "This program is the most exciting and challenging academic experience I've had." Even when programs closed, faculty recall the experiences the same way. Harry Wistrand of Agnes Scott College says, "The team-taught courses were a delight for faculty, beneficial in ways we didn't expect."

Through the close encounter of team-teaching, four-year faculty discover in their two-year faculty colleagues a high caliber of instruction and scholarship they may not have expected to see. In tandem with that change in perception, their stereotype of the community college student as a second-rate performer is eroded by the performance of the students in their classes. Program graduates who go on to transfer to Vassar, Bucknell, and Smith bring a vitality to the classroom that expands the intellectual dialogue for all the students at those institutions. In fact, an unforeseen but welcome outcome at Bucknell has been the steady inflow of STEP students. The college's faculty and administrators initially were surprised not only by how many STEP students were eager to transfer to Bucknell but also by how many were judged ready to do so by faculty at the end of the summer session.

For community college faculty, teaching in these programs is an effective antidote to burnout. In class and on campus during the summer sessions, they enjoy the intellectual exchange and equal partnership with their four-year colleagues. Since 1991, ET's two-year professors have enjoyed official adjunct status at Vassar, arranged by then dean of faculty Nancy Dye. As scholars, these community college faculty appreciate access to the Vassar library and the possibilities for research that it offers. As teachers, they appreciate the academic conversations about issues in their disciplines. They profit, too, from observing the Vassar faculty's leadership in using educational technology.

The residential setting is also a striking change for the two-year col-

lege faculty, especially those from urban institutions. Like their students, they too are relieved of the pressures of their everyday lives: family obligations, commuting, teaching too many classes, and responding to students with too many needs. The time, resources, and support of colleagues that foster teaching and learning are all available in one holistic package.

Like their Vassar colleagues, they appreciate teaching students who show up every day, on time, ready to learn — not the norm for the typical community college class. In ET, academic pressure enforces responsibility; absence or lateness puts a student behind. The prevailing standard of behavior, learned in the first few days, is based on the expectation that no one fails in the program because everyone meets the challenge. In fact, there are almost no dropouts: Program officers can recall a total of two over the first twelve years.

Faculty from both levels savor the academic excitement of developing a course they've always wanted to teach. The opportunity to learn from one another is another reward of the collaboration. Bridging the gap between the two-year curricular emphasis on concrete knowledge and the four-year's concentration on abstraction challenges faculty to explore methods and approaches. They incorporate a wide variety of strategies for active learning, involving students in debates, dramatic presentations, group design, and publication projects. The highest reward for these dedicated teachers remains the gratification of knowing that they have made a real difference for their students. As teachers, they are energized by students who are eager to take on every intellectual challenge, who respond with total engagement and candor. These students are not bashful. Under the influence of content and teaching styles that invite openness, they not only open, they expand. Offered stimulating ideas and invited to connect the ideas with their own experiences, the students build a momentum that carries their teachers along in it. As one LaGuardia professor noted, teaching in ET "was like an intellectual circus, where I was the trapeze artist performing without a net."

Over the years, the power of the site and the program design have created an unusual pedagogy. It abandons the usual two-year institution's "sound-bite" education of bits of information embedded in fifty-minute classes. Instead, ET offers two-hour classes and a faculty-student ratio of 1:9. The classroom environment calls for total concentration with no diversions. The emphasis is on teaching designed to "change [students'] lives, to open them up, not to box them in, not to lock them into factual regurgita-

tion." One faculty member calls it "liberation pedagogy." It is instruction that generates epiphanies for students and creates a bond between students and their teachers. The appeal to faculty is multidimensional. The Exploring Transfer model is an opportunity to teach new material to a different population. The program is faculty-based, and the team-teaching provides a degree of collegiality and consequent support that most faculty don't experience before or after ET. Faculty demonstrate their appreciation for the experience by the dedication they bring to it. Colton Johnson considers "the key element in the success of ET at Vassar is the faculty members who have led and shaped it."

One of Exploring Transfer's important contributions to higher education is demonstrating the value of team-teaching for both students and faculty. Although the faculty match doesn't always work, when it does it is "a marriage of souls," as one team member characterized it. When the instruction is truly shared, the process transforms the classroom. Stereotypes disappear and a learning community evolves.

Positive Results: The Institutions

Exploring Transfer has had a direct influence on the participating institutions. When the program began in 1985, collaboration between two- and four-year institutions was minimal. The original proposal contradicted a common assumption that community colleges were institutions of terminal education. But the vision of ET's designers proved to be valid: Pairing Vassar College with LaGuardia and the other community college partners was not such an odd combination after all. All of the institutions in the partnership have gained from it.

A significant result has been the respect both sectors have gained for community college students' potential and the concomitant responsibility of the institutions to promote transfer. Community college teachers come back from a summer of Exploring Transfer energized and enthusiastic. Having seen what their students can accomplish when challenged, they return with higher academic expectations and standards. They report the students' enthusiasm and potential for advanced learning to their colleagues, and the new attitude spreads. Faculty recognize that theirs is a major role in stimulating students' aspirations and helping them realize their potential.

The influence of Exploring Transfer is perhaps most visible at LaGuardia, because the largest number of ET's students and faculty have come from there. Since the first years of ET, the faculty mindset at

LaGuardia has changed. Now it is the norm to seek out students who show intellectual promise, push them to achieve, and actively engage them in pursuing transfer. Along with the college's administrators, its faculty are convinced that the two-year college can indeed serve two goals, terminal and preparatory education, and serve both well. As a result, LaGuardia has expanded its offerings of upper-level courses, giving instructors a chance to teach material beyond the developmental and introductory material that had been their staple diet.

ET director Cecilia Macheski has added another benefit to her classes at LaGuardia. She brings ET graduates in to talk about the joy of being stretched and succeeding. They discuss transfer and graduate school as realities. These visits are powerful motivators for all the students, increasing the ripple effect of Exploring Transfer far beyond those who experience it firsthand.

Students may in fact be the most effective force for expanding the program's influence. Having met Vassar's rigorous standards, ET students who returned to LaGuardia in the first years verbally assaulted its administration, demanding more challenging courses. The success of ET students and others who transferred successfully forced the institution to live up to the collegiate element of its mission. Returning students, supported by senior faculty, prodded the dean of faculty. That dean, Martin Moed, listened, and LaGuardia now has an honors program and a full array of honors courses. The college also generates many more applications for Exploring Transfer than it did in the early years, another sign of the strength of the student grapevine.

As a result of these developments, the transfer ethos in LaGuardia is vastly different today. Influenced by the Vassar program, the college has reaffirmed its commitment to encouraging students of color to transfer and earn degrees. There is a new appreciation for the desirability of increasing the pool of nontraditional students in higher education. In addition to the honors program, the college now has a full-time transfer counselor, two other staff members who advise high-achieving students about transfer, and a library section dedicated to transfer information.

All of these efforts have had an impact. Student participation in LaGuardia's transfer courses increased by 5 percent in the first five years after the launch of Exploring Transfer and by 10 percent over its first ten years. Before ET, in 1983, the college's transfer rate for graduates (the number of students receiving associate's degrees who enrolled in a senior college) was 45 percent. By 1994, the rate had risen to 55 percent.

LaGuardia now ranks in the top 100 colleges in the nation in its graduation rate, and the achievements of its students, notably those from Exploring Transfer, validate the collegiate function. Whole-hearted institutional commitment to the educational experiment of ET has led to recognition for LaGuardia as a vital contributor to the community college movement.

After LaGuardia, the institution most involved with Exploring Transfer is Dutchess Community College, Vassar's hometown partner. Dutchess has had a transfer office and an honors program since the 1970s, and its faculty expect their students to go on for bachelor's degrees. Still, ET has influenced Dutchess too. It has opened the minds of faculty and students to possibilities beyond the familiar path to a SUNY college nearby. Most of the Dutchess transfer students still follow that path, but they and their teachers know there are other options and that the students are capable of exercising them. A teacher who graduated from Columbia and sent his own sons there says that before ET, it did not occur to him to encourage his two-year students to apply to such a school. ET has changed that, for him and many others.

Equally eye-opening for the community college teachers is seeing their students rise to the intellectual challenge. In fact, some Dutchess faculty who value the ET program wish more of their students were eligible. Joel Diamond, a three-year ET faculty veteran, regrets that some qualified students who are middle class but whose academic horizons are as restricted as the low-income students ET targets are not considered. Another Dutchess professor and ET faculty member, Richard Reitano, shares this view. Reitano notes that during the years when large cadres of students came back from ET together, there was a noticeable impact at Dutchess, but the effects are less apparent now that the cohort is smaller. (See Chapter 5 for the evolution of ET's student selection criteria.)

Still, these teachers strongly support the program. They prize it for opening new doors for historically underserved students, giving them a new sense of their potential. Diamond says, "I still recruit for ET — there are plenty of eligible students who need the opportunity." He suggests that one specific result of the program's effect was the formation of a chapter of Phi Theta Kappa, the community college honor society, at Dutchess. But the biggest impact, in his view, has been that faculty are encouraged to think about broader academic opportunities for their students.

Dutchess faculty are energized by team-teaching with Vassar colleagues. Faculty member Judy Kohl points out that team-teaching had only been done once or twice at the college before ET. Since faculty began coming back

bursting with enthusiastic reports of their summer experiences at Vassar, team-teaching has expanded on the campus, with full encouragement from the Dutchess administration.

The program has opened other doors for faculty collaboration. Joel Diamond of Dutchess and Mort Tavel of Vassar were teaching partners in ET. The relationship they established led Tavel to invite Diamond to teach a class with him during the regular Vassar term. Another connection came through Richard Reitano's course for Dutchess students participating in the national Model United Nations (MUN) program. The course, which has been offered for a number of years, engages students in developing and presenting the positions of a specific country at the annual MUN conference. Because his course focuses on a different country each year, students may repeat it for credit. The course was so popular that ET alums transferring to Vassar asked to go back and take the MUN course as part of their Vassar degree. Now, Reitano's program is called the Hudson River MUN Group, and students from Vassar and Dutchess participate together, earning credit at their respective institutions.

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For Judy Kohl, a Dutchess Community College faculty leader and member of the ET planning committee, four summer sessions have made her a more well rounded teacher. Teaching on an interdisciplinary team broadened her approach to teaching literature. The students' pride in having read ten or more books during ET's five weeks emboldened her to increase reading requirements in her Dutchess courses and to assign complete works rather than anthology snippets. Sharing her experience with colleagues led many of them to follow her example.

Another important insight from team teaching is that "I don't have to be the center of the classroom. I refuse to lecture. I came to understand that what goes on in the classroom must be student-generated, so I teach them how to read and how to question. There is a list of things that must be covered, but I draw it out of the students."

For Vassar president Frances Fergusson and dean of faculty Norman Fainstein, ET is simply the right thing to do. In Fainstein's words, "Elite institutions have an obligation to make their benefits available as widely as possible." When Fainstein came to Vassar from Baruch College in 1995, one of the first events he attended was a graduation reception for ET. There he met and learned about the background of a promising 28-year-old biopsychology major with two children. Before the reception was over, he had assured her of acceptance at Vassar and a scholarship. He says, "Rarely do I have an opportunity like this to change a person's life."

Fergusson also sees Exploring Transfer as augmenting the college's diversity in a number of ways. Typical of community college students, most ET transfers are economically disadvantaged and many are minorities. Her broader purpose, however, is to create a student body that is more varied on many dimensions, including age. In fact, Fergusson says some of the

college's most successful students are older. Altogether, she says, "We are very pleased and proud to have the program."

Exploring Transfer is only one element of continuing efforts to make a Vassar education more accessible. Overall, the proportion of students of color at Vassar has increased from 15.5 percent in 1986 to 23 percent in 1996. In 1996, some 54 percent of Vassar students received financial aid, totaling just under $18 million. While the largest share of financial aid is allocated to meet the needs of incoming freshmen, aid is available for transfer students and it enables a number of ET graduates to enroll in Vassar each year.

Positive Results: Outside Views

Harold Wechsler, professor of educational research at the University of Rochester, evaluated Exploring Transfer after its second year for the Association of American Colleges and Universities. In his monograph on the AAC&U/Mellon project, *The Transfer Challenge*, Wechsler wrote:

> *The spirit of cooperation manifest in the relationships between faculty members carried over to the students. Students initially expressed concern about living away from home and being in the constant company of their peers, but within a few days they formed collaborative study groups....Student collaboration (in addition, of course, to institutional support) helped participants adjust to Vassar's more demanding academic environment. Course grades ranged from A to C+, slightly higher than a typical Vassar course grade range. Student successes in adjusting to these demands helped convince two-year college faculty participants that many of their students were capable of considerable accomplishments....This full-time summer program made transfer a central institutional activity, not an additional project for already overburdened two- or four-year college administrators, faculty members, and students....The institute showed that able two-year college students who commit themselves full time to academic inquiry can succeed in a demanding environment....Institutional and student commitment translated into good transcripts, heightened self-esteem, and developed abilities. All participants in the first two institutes transferred to four-year colleges — half to public institutions, half to independent institutions. (1989: 50-51)*

A second evaluator, Anne Marie McCarten, reported to the Ford Foundation on the program following its second year:

Vassar and LaGuardia began planning this collaborative in 1983. Since that time, they have designed and offered the summer program twice, sought and obtained funding from several sources, involved numerous persons from both colleges, and survived a change of leadership at one of the institutions. At the very least, this indicates that this project has been successful as a collaboration between a city community college and a private four-year college. This collaboration has worked well, apparently because of the support of the colleges' presidents for the project; the vision, ideas, and commitment of key Vassar and LaGuardia administrators; and the selection of faculty members who are willing to participate in an experience outside of their usual teaching routine.

These objectives embody many principles of the growing body of literature on what constitutes good teaching. As described earlier, faculty who previously were not acquainted with each other were able to design and team-teach new, interdisciplinary courses. This is a significant accomplishment. From the anecdotal evidence collected thus far, this has been a highly successful aspect of the program. All participating faculty report that the experience has had them re-examine aspects of their teaching. At least one stated that the experience gave him "the conviction" to go back and teach the new course at his community college.

Community college faculty report that the collaboration served to instill greater expectations about what their students are capable of producing. Vassar faculty report that their community college colleagues taught them new ways of encouraging active learning by students. (1986: 2-3)

Risks: For Students

The picture of the Exploring Transfer model is incomplete without looking at its potential risks. For students, there are several. One is the disruption of personal and family relationships that can occur after the kind of changes ET produces. Its program officers do not collect data on broken marriages or disrupted families and friendships, but they know these have happened to some students following ET, and at least in part because the program raised students' expectations and gave them new career goals. Exploring Transfer changes the way its graduates see themselves and where they can go in the world. But that may mean they no longer fit comfortably in their old milieus. As a student originally from South America said

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Yun Jong Moh (ET '89) came to the United States from Korea when he was 20 and entered LaGuardia Community College four years later. Majoring in computer science, he did well at LaGuardia, but he had no confidence in his English ability. A friend in Phi Theta Kappa, the community college honor society, told him about ET and he was accepted. Then his friend challenged him to take ET's literature course, and again he accepted the challenge.

Midway through the summer session, Moh had a personal crisis: He realized that his careful plan for a career in computer science was not right for him. He says, "It was surprising and frightening — I had seen the light, but there was no way to turn around." So he transferred to Cornell as a computer science major but two years later changed to political science. Two courses short of graduation, he took time off to work and travel. He expects to complete his degree through independent study.

Moh served as an ET peer counselor for two sessions and may pursue a career working with disadvantaged students. He says, "The most solid thing I believe in is ET — I can open my heart and put myself into it completely."

of fitting in both back home and at Vassar, "It's hard to know where I belong." Vassar program coordinator Tom McGlinchey acknowledges what he calls the "destructive" aspects of the ET experience when the session fulfills its intention of transforming students' lives. McGlinchey adds, though, that this phenomenon also can be a source of energy as students find they can re-create themselves.

From her involvement in the program during its early years, AAC&U officer Jane Spalding also recognizes the displacement phenomenon. She sees it as showing "how truly revolutionary education is." Until ET, some students, especially women, live lives based on a set of assumptions held in common with their mates. Spalding suggests that in the awakening of ET, "first the assumptions become questioned and then, for the woman, they become inaccurate." But she sees the process as constructive. Having gone through it, students are different, but always *more*, never less than they were at the beginning.

Tom McGlinchey sees the same paradox in the intellectual effect of the program. Exploring Transfer breaks down old modes of learning but replaces them with new, liberating skills. Academically, ET rejects the comfortable but limiting methods of instruction familiar to the typical community college. It frees the students from subservience to a single text, as they gain mastery using a range of texts for analysis and synthesis. It liberates them from seeing science as a mysterious doctrine. As they move from content learning to structural learning, they discover that their learning skills are transportable from one field to another.

On the practical side, students must unlearn old study techniques in order to meet the challenge of reading two and three books and writing as many papers each week. To keep up with the flow of new ideas, they must re-learn how to learn. These are lessons that program faculty must make explicit if their students are to keep afloat in the sea of stimulation

that such programs create.

Another inherent risk is that ET graduates who do not continue in college will feel they have failed. Opening students' minds and their sense of their own possibilities is really the goal of the program's faculty. Faculty know that baccalaureate study is not the only way to demonstrate achievement of this goal. Still, because of the program's focus on transfer, some students who do not follow that path may suffer yet one more blow to their self-esteem. In candid conversations, some ET graduates who left college without a degree admit to a sense of personal failure. Nevertheless, many of them still value the experience for its own sake. They recognize, as the faculty intended, that exposure to liberal study has intrinsic value. As Janet Lieberman says, "We send them up as accountants; they come back as poets."

The program's faculty strive to enlighten and expand horizons for their students, but of course they also promote transfer to a four-year institution. They particularly encourage those students they believe would benefit to consider a liberal arts college. But students who accept the challenge and gain admission to a baccalaureate institution, especially to a selective, private college, may also experience a sense of alienation. In ET, STEP, and CCC, participants share many similarities in background. But once they enter the mainstream, they may find that is no longer true. Even though Vassar faculty, for example, appreciate the more mature and engaged ET student, the students themselves may find it daunting to merge into the regular student body. An African-American alumna of ET from Borough of Manhattan Community College studying at Vassar put it this way: "Your image of yourself is real shattered here. Community college is like high school. Here [at Vassar] I'm talking to people who read Milton in high school, spent six weeks studying for the SAT. [My high school] doesn't even have a college office."

The most Exploring Transfer and its peer programs can do is to prepare their students for their next steps. This the programs do well. ET transfer students at Vassar talk about the difficulty of the work and of finding their place in social relationships, but they recognize the opportunity, and they stay with it. As one African-American transfer student from Westchester Community College said, midway through his first term at Vassar:

> *Larry [Rushing], Tom [McGlinchey], and Judy [Kobl] told us about the transition, but it went in one ear and out the other. There are so many skills, social and academic; kids here are so prepared.... Finding a rhythm, setting up my time, meeting expectations and demands, and*

BEST COPY AVAILABLE 106

still having some fun — I'm juggling. The first couple of weeks I wanted to leave; now I'll stay here.... [ET] allows people to get a piece of an institution like this, to be the best person they can be.

Risks: Faculty and Institutions

Perhaps the biggest risk for faculty in these programs is being mismatched on an incompatible team. This happens rarely, but when it does, it is thoroughly uncomfortable for all concerned, students included. A mismatch is more likely to happen when the teaching partners don't have a chance to get fairly well acquainted before the summer session starts. After the few such bad experiences at ET, the steering committee now goes to great lengths to arrange matches that they are sure will work. They have not had a problem since establishing the policy that each team should include one member with ET experience.

Another risk, rarely brought up by faculty, is the loss of precious summer time that otherwise could be spent on scholarly pursuits or rest and relaxation. One senior faculty member from a replication college noted that when he decided to teach in the program, he warned his wife it meant giving up time to do publication and research, and hence merit pay increases. Faculty enthusiasts such as this one apparently feel that the rewards of teaching in the program repay these sacrifices. But such sacrifices are more easily made by senior faculty whose reputations and academic rank are well established.

Students returning from Exploring Transfer may present a considerable challenge to community college faculty. When they go back to complete their degrees, many report "feeling isolated, lonely, and dissatisfied with coursework," according to LaGuardia's Larry Rushing. Having been given their voices or new skill in using them at Exploring Transfer, many students return to their two-year campuses and demand changes. The collaborating community colleges have learned, after the initial shock has worn off, that this is constructive criticism, well worth heeding.

Examples of changes wrought by Exploring Transfer alumnae/i include the expansion of advanced course offerings at LaGuardia described in Chapter 5. At Dutchess Community College, the honors program predated ET, but it received new impetus from ET graduates looking for more demanding courses. ET also stimulated the organizing of a campus chapter of Phi Theta Kappa. At Borough of Manhattan Community College, ET graduates complained about the lack of challenge, and the college now offers special courses for its top students.

Exploring Transfer itself has come in for some criticism on the community college campuses from those who consider the program elitist. The application form has been one target for critics, in particular because of a required essay. The application asked candidates to write an "analytical essay on the following topic: 'Living within my culture is important to me because it strengthens me as an individual; however, in some ways, my culture is also a prison which separates me from the rest of society.'" This offended some potential applicants and their sponsors. That particular essay is no longer part of the ET application, but Tom McGlinchey says its replacement has caused complaints too. Perhaps application forms for selective programs are doomed to be lightning rods for criticism.

The matter of funding is a key issue for all of the partnerships. Publicly funded community colleges generally do not have discretionary money available for such programs. The two-year partners provide in-kind services to carry out the student selection process and other administrative activities on the campus. Their faculty usually donate considerable time in planning the courses. But the major funding burden falls on the four-year partner.

Vassar has taken responsibility for funding Exploring Transfer as part of its ethos of social responsibility. The college is fortunate in the continuing commitment of its trustees and alumnae/i as well as the support of funding agencies in advancing that ethos. A stable funding base for ET now appears to exist thanks to the Ford Foundation challenge grant and major gifts from several Vassar graduates.

But funding remains an issue for the replication programs at Bucknell University and Smith College. Smith has managed to find considerable outside funding, but program director Don Reutener says Community College Connections "hangs on by its fingernails." Bucknell funds the bulk of the costs for its Student Transfer Enrichment Program, although the Community College of Philadelphia has contributed financially, and the two institutions are working together on fund-raising.

Although the ET model was not envisioned as a recruiting vehicle for the senior colleges, because that would limit students' options, recruitment can be one rationale for support from the four-year college sector. In practice, these programs have brought new and diverse students to their host colleges. The numbers of students are small, and they usually need scholarships, but program graduates are good risks, with a high rate of degree completion. They have already experienced transfer shock, and they possess skills for coping with the expectations of the liberal arts college. At

Bucknell, this recruitment aspect of its STEP program has proven to be helpful in justifying the program's existence.

The difficulty of funding projects that cross institutional boundaries continues to plague efforts to open those boundaries to deserving students. Yet the transforming power of Exploring Transfer, STEP, and CCC — to stimulate and liberate the intelligence, desire, and survival powers of students — has enabled many of these students to cross those boundaries. Their struggles and achievements emphasize both the pervasiveness of the obstacles and the power of effective intervention to break them down.

These programs produce substantial educational and personal benefits for students, faculty, and institutions relative to their costs. The model's effectiveness in lowering obstacles and expanding possibilities recommends it to others in higher education who share these aims.

chapter
9

Making a Difference: Ensuring Success

The Exploring Transfer model merits wider adaptation. It effectively promotes the democratic ideal of equal educational opportunity. It facilitates social and economic mobility by making the baccalaureate degree accessible to students, particularly those of color, traditionally underserved by higher education. The model is founded on the principles of liberal study, which expands students' intellectual horizons and life direction possibilities. The unusual collaboration provides a workable model for educational reform, overcoming ghettoization and disjunction between sectors. It demonstrates the power of higher education for connecting individuals and for extending the universality of educational promise.

Exploring Transfer thus serves a broader goal than that of simply increasing the transfer rate of community college students, although this is one measure of success. Simply put, the goal is to open the minds of disenfranchised students to the joy of rigorous learning and the options available to them, and to give them the skills and confidence to exercise their options. ET does this consistently, summer after summer.

Achieving this goal is central to the transfer mission of the community college. Yet community colleges can only achieve it in collaboration with four-year institutions. In the case of Exploring Transfer and its peers, the baccalaureate colleges made the first overture. This is not always necessary for a successful collaboration — it may begin with the community college. Wherever the initiative originates, the four-year college must be as fully committed to the partnership as the two-year college.

For colleges with an interest in serving disenfranchised students, replicating Exploring Transfer is ideal. In the words of Vassar dean of faculty Norman Fainstein, "It is a simple but elegant model; it works." For the program to succeed, however, replicators must recognize that it is a holistic package: a set of necessary conditions and critical components. Conditions that must be present include

- a cadre of faculty whose interests and talents fit the program's requirements,
- institutional collaboration based on equality,
- strong commitment and leadership at the top, and
- adequate funding.

Its critical components are

- recruitment and selection of students who will benefit,
- vibrant interdisciplinary courses taught by outstanding cross-sector faculty teams,
- incorporation of diversity and other real-life issues as intellectual content, and
- a residential learning community that includes academic and personal support.

Finally, effective replication requires a thorough planning process to ensure that all the ingredients are in place and working together.

The Right Stuff: Faculty

The first essential is the faculty. Their role is multifaceted, exhausting, and exhilarating, but certain characteristics must be present. Because program faculty serve many functions, they must not only volunteer but also genuinely want to do it. They should be looking for new challenges, a different pedagogical environment, and they must care deeply about the program goals. Faculty need to drive the program and gain great satisfaction in it. They must coordinate, advocate, teach, and counsel. Some faculty must function as champions of the program in their own institution, taking responsibility for promoting and recruiting new faculty and students.

To be successful, the individual teachers must excel in their disciplines and have significant teaching experience. They must be professionally accomplished, embodying attitudes of both professional dedication and personal accessibility. They must see capacity building as a primary goal. The program requires flexibility and a high tolerance for ambiguity; courses may need revision, and decisions are usually democratic. It is important to organize the classroom around principles of cooperation, not competition between faculty members or students. Faculty need enough confidence to work under constant observation by peers and students. One faculty member compared teaching in Exploring Transfer to being on a SWAT team; another to climbing a mountain, reaching the top, and being exhaust-

ed and exhilarated after the climb was over.

Replicating Exploring Transfer calls for faculty who are acknowledged leaders and who are committed to exploration and change. Then they must be given responsibility for the program. An important factor in the success of Exploring Transfer was Colton Johnson's decision at Vassar that faculty would be responsible. This increased ET's attraction to both two-year and four-year faculty and contributed to its collegiality. Faculty made all the key decisions: recruitment, admissions, courses, calendar. From the first meeting, as professors paired off with colleagues from collaborating institutions, the chemistry of team-teaching catalyzed enthusiasm and creativity to yield innovative courses and programs. Trust grew as individual teachers formed friendships and working together produced mutual goals. As the romance of the "marriage" developed, a sense of equality emerged.

Volleyball on the lawn at Vassar – ET students and faculty.

This sense of the faculty partnerships as dynamic and fundamental to the program is echoed throughout the replication projects. Faculty from both two-year and four-year colleges speak warmly of the personal value of the team experience and express a keen sense of accomplishment as academics and as change agents for students.

Mutual Collaboration

The quality of the collaboration of partner institutions and their representatives is another critical condition. As Vassar professor Harvey Flad noted, hierarchy is a fact of life in four-year institutions. Or, in the words of Bucknell codirector Ernest Keen: "While no one in the STEP program dwells on the prestige hierarchy among academic institutions, a given fact of the situation is that Bucknell is high in this hierarchy and CCP is low."

Thus, it is crucial that the desire to create an *equal* partnership be explicit, beginning with the four-year partner. At Vassar, Colton Johnson established this clearly from the beginning of Exploring Transfer, and it continues to pervade the attitude of the Vassar faculty.

Bucknell administrator (now faculty member) Tom Greaves wrote of the STEP program,

> *Both CCP and Bucknell have succeeded in this program because of a strong and thorough partnership developed among senior administra-*

> *tors, staff, and faculty of both institutions. From the outset, we have not seen the STEP Program as a product of a lead institution and a following institution. Indeed, it is abundantly clear that the program would have faltered had that sort of relationship been allowed to develop. (in Keen 1991: 5)*

STEP director Keen cites this statement to emphasize that, while everyone involved in the program works to maintain a relationship of equality, such a relationship is unusual and cannot be taken for granted. Maintaining it is a special responsibility of the four-year institution, but the community colleges must also support and nurture it.

Replicators need to recognize that trust between institutions is a function of working together over time; there is no shortcut. Faculty and administrators need time for planning, to allow trust to develop and to ensure the quality of the program. Faculty from both sectors bring skepticism to their initial meetings. The gap between two- and four-year institutions is long established, and bridging it requires tough questions and honest answers. For faculty, mutual trust comes from interactive planning and arriving at common goals through face-to-face meetings of administrators and faculty. For team-teaching to work, the pairs must be a real team; that too requires time.

Equality and trust must be at the foundation of the collaboration, for the satisfaction of faculty but even more for the sake of students. Students must know that the courses they take meet the high standards of the four-year college — that they are getting the genuine article and not a watered-down imitation. They must sense that the contributions of the teachers from their community colleges are valued equally with those of the host college's. They absolutely must not be patronized as students.

Leadership and Commitment From the Top

To maximize the contribution of their faculty in these programs, the presidents of the partnering institutions need an unusual combination of attitudes. They must be able to encourage and foster new policies and at the same time be willing to let others lead in carrying them out. This duality is essential because these projects — like all change efforts — must have full support from the top of the administrative ladder, yet be faculty run. The president should sponsor the program, make it a college-wide effort, and see it as important to the college image. He or she must make the commitment clear to everyone, so that support comes from all areas of the institution. For example, at Vassar, Bucknell, and Smith, the presidents have directed their devel-

opment officers to work with program staff on outside funding efforts.

Ideally, these programs also have an administrative champion at the dean level, like Colton Johnson at Vassar or Janet Lieberman at LaGuardia. These champions are people who espouse the idea in budget discussions and honor the leadership of faculty in running the program. Finally, but in another sense firstly, there must be the linchpin, the director or codirectors, dedicated to seeing that the program remains on all the right agendas, working with the faculty and the student selection process, making the thing go and keep going. At Smith, this is Don Reutener. At Bucknell, it is Ernest Keen, abetted at CCP by William Baker. For Vassar, following Johnson there has been Tom McGlinchey plus a series of dedicated faculty program directors, including Janet Andrews, Obika Gray, John Chaffee, Larry Rushing, and Cecilia Macheski. The loss or reassignment of such a leader was clearly a factor in the demise of two of the replication projects. They demonstrate how important one or two dedicated people can be in nurturing a project that has no natural home base in higher education's administrative structures.

Leaders also need to set an agenda to engage and reward faculty for participating. The program requires a significant element of sacrifice from faculty. They give up a summer of research, travel, relaxation, or in some cases better-paying work. They must begin planning during the regular academic year to be ready for the summer session. The program itself is demanding: experimenting with the course to keep up with students' challenges, spending time with students outside of class as part of the learning community, helping them with writing skills, offering transfer information seminars. Because of tight budgets, faculty often contribute their planning time without benefit of reduced teaching loads. For what? The satisfaction of fostering student success, plus the opportunity to assume leadership in a faculty-driven program. Ideally, their contributions would be a factor in tenure and promotion for younger faculty. When top administrators cannot provide more tangible rewards, they need to recognize these faculty for the value of their service in some other way within the institution.

Funding Sources

The history of Exploring Transfer and its replications — both those that continue and those that ended — underscores the important role that funding agencies play in identifying national problems and stimulating interinstitutional collaboration. Foundations help spur institutions to think

beyond their daily operations and seek new solutions to difficult and stubborn problems. The spur to improve the abysmally low transfer rate from two-year colleges led LaGuardia to seek and cement a partnership that had never been envisioned. The prestige of the Ford Foundation legitimized the partnership for both LaGuardia and Vassar and created an environment of problem solving to which both faculties and administrators responded. Contributions from the private sector also have played a major role in supporting Exploring Transfer and the replications.

Such programmatic reform almost always requires outside funding. For the senior college, program costs can be difficult to justify unless the institution has a strong commitment to increasing access or sees the program as a valuable recruiting tool. Most public community colleges do not have tax levy funds to devote to such programs unless they also receive grant funds. Yet, when their costs are weighed against the difference these programs make for students and ultimately for our society, it is clear that institutions should be encouraged to make the effort.

Key Components: Students

Bringing the right students to the session is crucial, first for cementing trust among faculty and institutions and then for achieving its goals. Tom Greaves calls student selection the key to the success of Bucknell's program with the Community College of Philadelphia:

> *Faculty at the community college identify students who have little or no knowledge of their own possibilities or that a two-year degree should be only the beginning. They don't have the perspective to know what they should be aiming for. So STEP is an incredibly opening experience for them.*

Such students, often underachievers relative to their academic potential, are at the heart of the Exploring Transfer model. Recruiting and nominating them is the challenge of the community college faculty and counselors. But it is not a simple affair. Selection is compounded by the second half of the requirement: The students must be able to make it. They must have the capacity for demanding academic work and the toughness to persevere in a setting that is totally new in its intellectual rigor and emotionally challenging in its personal dislocation. Identifying students who meet both criteria is complicated by the desire of many community college faculty to provide this opportunity to their own special "stars." In multicollege part-

nerships, faculty typically are eager to send as large a group as possible from their own college.

One more aspect of the selection process is the common intent to ensure a significant number of students of color. Actually, it may not be especially difficult to find the special combination of characteristics among such students, who can be particularly prone to low self-expectations because of their negative experiences in the educational system. Recruiting men may be the greater challenge.

Additional selection criteria for students in Exploring Transfer are the following:

- One year's experience at the two-year college.
- A grade-point average of B or better.
- An acceptable level of writing skill as displayed in an admissions essay.
- Recommendation of a community college faculty member.
- Determination that the student has not previously applied to a four-year college.
- Preference is given to students who are the first in their families to attend college.

In fact, all the criteria are not met by every student accepted in the program. A few ET students have attended a four-year institution some years earlier, but may have worked for many years or had children before returning to college at significant personal cost. Others have college-educated parents from whom they are estranged.

So the application criteria serve as a rough screen. The campus coordinators encourage their faculty colleagues to identify students who will benefit from the program. Then it is up to the faculty selection committee to judge — individually and as they consider the balance of the cohort in terms of gender, ethnicity, and sending colleges. Vassar's Exploring Transfer and the replications have general guidelines, more flexible than quotas, to help determine the kind of balance they seek. By all accounts, the Vassar, Bucknell, and Smith committees do their work well. The students they choose are bright, often aggressive, always eager to learn, ripe to respond to challenge and opportunity. The best evidence is that once selected, students almost never drop out.

The recruiting process depends on the community college faculty, who encourage students who meet the criteria to attend campus informa-

tion sessions and to apply for the programs. These invitations from their teachers get the students' attention. Yet even with that encouragement, students need continuing reassurance and help to complete their applications. Their faculty sponsors spend time with them, refer them for counseling to solve home problems, help them with academic and work schedules to fit the summer session into their plans, and advise them on what to expect. Students understand that they must be ready to try new ideas, that they must bring a sense of adventure and willingness to take risks.

Key Components: Faculty Teams

The other crucial element in the learning partnership is the faculty team. In addition to the desirable faculty characteristics already discussed, the Exploring Transfer model's special curriculum has its own demands. Faculty must be experienced team-teachers or eager to try it. It helps if they are familiar with differences in learning and thinking styles and have expertise in teaching strategies relating to these differences.

The next challenge is creating compatible teams. Matching is done somewhat differently at each site, but the universal principle is that it should be done with care to ensure the greatest chance for success. The cost of failure is high for both faculty and students; the rewards of success are equally high and far more common. Bucknell STEP director Ernest Keen comments on the subject of teams:

> *When the team works, there is an inevitable series of accommodations that must be made in order for it to work, and these accommodations ought to be growthful for both partners. For example, in one team, the first series of papers were seen by the [Community College of Philadelphia] person as pretty good, while they were seen by the Bucknell partner as unacceptable. The ensuing discussions between these partners not only had to reach a compromise between two degrees of excellence; they had to invent a notion of excellence they could agree on which was a joint product, not available to either one alone, a notion to which they could commit themselves and which solidified their commitment to one another. Neither partner taught the course they thought they were going to teach. The standards that each originally brought had to change in terms of the goals and purposes of the course itself, and of the program as a whole.*
>
> *Teams therefore have the greatest probability of working when the right teachers are chosen in the first place, when they collaborate in*

selecting students, and when they approach the summer realizing fully the various contexts and dimensions of the pedagogical task before them. (1991: 10)

Faculty must be prepared to acknowledge and address a fundamental fact: lack of skills, largely in rhetoric, characterizes these students. LaGuardia's Cecilia Macheski observes that the students' previous learning experiences, particularly in writing, fail to give them a sense of their audience. They have written endless journals in a narcissistic educational framework with no attention to grammar or a global perspective. This is one of the reasons it is so vital to have faculty from both sectors teach together. The two-year faculty understand that these students come from a milieu where they are among the better writers, yet, as the quote from Keen illustrates, that doesn't mean they meet the four-year college standard. Hence, the program's teachers must recognize that "skill-content" (Keen's term) is as important to the learning as is content in the conventional sense.

Key Components: Curriculum, Residential Experience, Support Systems

The significance for both white students and those of color of having diversity as a cornerstone of the curriculum was discussed in Chapter 8. It is a central element, but it is a part of a broader aim: to show students how liberal learning helps them understand and handle the important aspects of their daily lives. The rest of the course content must have as much meaning, though it will carry less emotional charge.

To match the impact of the successful programs at Vassar, Bucknell, and Smith, new replications must use teaching methods that engage students fully in the learning process. Students should read widely and in original sources, they should write constantly, they should argue and create, and they should encounter major cultural figures and forms.

This is one reason these programs appeal so strongly to faculty. Professors have a green light to create the most stimulating courses they can produce. Then they use all their creativity to present the material in ways that honor the learning styles and skill-development needs of the students. Faculty work very hard, they take lots of risks, and they gain a great deal of satisfaction.

One technical aspect of curriculum critical for students is the transfer of credit from the program. Time is in fact money for the kind of student these programs serve. To justify the time, the sacrifice of summer earnings,

and the use of their financial aid eligibility, students must earn credit acceptable both at their two-year college and at a four-year college. Students in Exploring Transfer earn credit for two courses of three credits each plus one additional credit for work in the Vassar writing lab. These credits are accepted by Vassar and their community colleges; all seven credits also transfer to other four-year institutions. This is true for the Smith and Bucknell programs as well.

Research has found that the residential experience is a major factor in academic success (Astin 1985). Certainly, it is an essential element in the Exploring Transfer model, its centrality borne out by student and faculty evaluations. As important as the effect of the academic challenge, "what was radically new for the community college students was the whole concept of a complete living and learning environment" that is at the heart of the residential liberal arts college experience, suggests Vassar's Colton Johnson. As Don Reutener of Smith says, "From day one, students are part of a community whose primary purpose is academic and intellectual excellence. They are totally immersed in this community, no longer fragmented by jobs or families."

The social cohesion that can develop from the residential setting is a powerful determinant of the program's outcomes. In the best case, students begin to understand their connection to their society. They gain a sense of membership in an intellectual community, and they learn that such membership is transportable. Their removal from ordinary distractions and their intense focus on academic pursuits give the students time and courage to ask questions. The risk taking that the program encourages results in students becoming more active learners and expanding their academic horizons. As one faculty member observed, "They make the transition from their background to their dreams."

One question for program planners to resolve is how much to insist that students stay onsite throughout the summer session. Smith associate dean of the faculty Marilyn Schuster describes what is probably common practice: "Students were expected to stay on campus for weekends, but we didn't enforce that rule strictly. Some needed to return home at least once during the program to take care of family matters." Keeping students together on campus is easier when the site is relatively far from home, as it is at Smith and Bucknell and for New York City students at Vassar. In the Agnes Scott and Lewis and Clark programs, most students were still in their hometowns, and it was difficult to prevent them from going home. Program

faculty and many students realize that this dilutes the power of the experience, yet forcing students to stay on campus against their will runs counter to the spirit of the program.

The quality of academic support in each of the programs also contributes to students' learning. Given the leap the programs ask students to make and the compressed time in which they must make it, adequate support is a requisite for successful replication. Vassar, Bucknell, and Smith each handles support services differently, but for all three support is a strong component. Special support for writing may come from a specialist such as Tom McGlinchey at Vassar or from program faculty, peer counselors, a skills lab, or some combination. For example, Smith dedicates staff in the college's Center for Academic Development to help Community College Connections students with their writing and quantitative skills. The CCC students learn that such support is an integral part of the education at Smith; there is no stigma attached to accepting help.

The role of peer counselors is also somewhat different in each of the programs. At Vassar, for example, the counselors help students interpret assignments, explain faculty comments on writing, review key concepts, organize study groups, and generally advise and counsel. At Smith, they are called "academic peer assistants" and they work closely with staff in the Center for Academic Development, set up workshops on study habits, and assist faculty with classroom preparation.

These valuable adjuncts to the learning community mediate the gap between teaching and learning, creating a bridge between the classroom and the dorm. At the same time, they are models. They show the programs' students the path to transfer; they are success stories with whom the students can identify. As models, they also encourage the students to see teaching as a career. Working for the college in such a capacity looks like fun. But selecting and preparing these peer counselors must be done with care. For many students, the peer counselors become their key link with the program. This is especially true when the counselors are themselves program graduates.

One more support element is critical for increasing successful transfer. That is information about financial aid, scholarships, college selection, and application — all obstacles to transfer for such students. Once the summer session opens their eyes to the possibilities, the students are ready for help in taking on the bureaucratic jargon and jumping the transfer system's hurdles. The help must be intentionally built in; it doesn't just happen.

The Key to It All: Planning and Funding

To include all of these environmental components in creating an Exploring Transfer model program requires adequate planning time. To skip the planning step is a grave mistake.

A two-year planning calendar is advisable. The first planning year can be profitably spent in reaching agreement among the presidents and trustees of the partner institutions, in raising funds, and in preliminary meetings of the faculties from both sectors. Once funding for the first three years or so is secure, the faculty can begin to plan the curriculum, course schedule, student selection criteria, admissions process, credit arrangements, and the myriad details involved in organizing a mini-college. Holding initial preliminary meetings between faculties a year before the program opens helps to ensure a smooth start.

If faculty compensation differs significantly between the two- and four-year colleges, administrators need to agree on how to accommodate the disparity. Hiring appropriate counselors also requires advance planning. Logistics in the area of support services from the residential institution (housing, food service, library, computer and writing labs, athletic facilities) will require careful early preparation.

Perhaps the greatest advantage of advance planning is that it provides time to put the program on a sound financial basis. Fund-raising takes time. Vassar's summer program of five weeks costs approximately $2,500 per student. Over the course of Exploring Transfer's history, foundations and corporations have provided funding, augmented by the president's budget. Since Vassar completed the Ford Foundation challenge grant, ET's budget has had a strong funding base.

To fund Community College Connections, Smith College approached corporate foundations in the Hartford, Connecticut, area, since the program's first partner was Capital Community-Technical College, located in Hartford. Special grants have enabled the college to add its tribal college partners. For the Student Transfer Enrichment Program, funding comes essentially from Bucknell. Recently, the Community College of Philadelphia has been able to contribute to the budget too, and the two partners are going together to approach Philadelphia foundations for support.

Eight Lessons From Exploring Transfer

For educators eager to address the problems of inequity and lack of access, the Exploring Transfer model is one path to improvement. The

mini-college experience results in a record of achievement and repeated individual testimony. Students previously marginalized by the educational and social systems gain increased confidence, which is seminal to raising aspirations and achievement. The faculty who teach them are also changed and revitalized by the experiences.

Further, the Exploring Transfer model has broad consequences beyond its impact on the students and faculty who participate. While achieving the goal of changing individual students' lives, the program also brings fundamental changes that enable the higher education system to serve larger societal goals.

Here are some of the lessons the ET model offers to educators who would further those goals:

Institutional Lessons

- A viable and untapped pool of community college students capable of baccalaureate study exists. When institutions reduce barriers to transfer and provide transitional education, these students can achieve bachelor's degrees and go on to significant accomplishments.
- Institutions can help these students succeed by increasing academic demands on them and concomitantly providing effective academic and other support.
- Public and private institutions can collaborate effectively, and such collaboration can win support from outside funders.
- Demonstrating the capabilities of community college students in a four-year setting raises standards of achievement and enhances the academic functioning of the community college.

Educational Lessons

- The experience of living, studying, and achieving success in a selective and rigorous residential college builds self-esteem and educational mastery in students and renews enthusiasm among faculty.
- Liberal studies and student-centered experiential learning create an effective pedagogy for transformational education.
- Team-teaching and interdisciplinary studies enhance learning opportunities and bridge the gap between two-year and four-year college pacing and standards.
- Meshing the cultures of the public community college and the independent residential college by engaging students with faculty from both worlds enlightens all participants.

Collaboratives such as Exploring Transfer are a logical and powerful response to the challenges facing higher education. The model is cost-effective; it has broad impact beyond a single institution. It serves as a model for diversity and multicultural education as faculty relate differences in cultural background and learning styles to teaching content and strategies. These programs change the students, the faculty, and the institutions. Students raise their sights; faculty raise their expectations; the values of the institutions expand. The influence of the programs ripples beyond the students and faculty directly involved.

If it is to serve its educational and societal functions, higher education needs deep change. Part of this change is giving up its hierarchical attitudes and breaking down its societal isolation. The rigidity of its pecking order and the inflexibility of its reward structures must give way to networks of common values and interests. The colleges that are part of programs such as Exploring Transfer are showing a way to effect this deep change.

123

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1985
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1987
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1988
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AT&T Foundation $100,000
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1989
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Janet Lieberman *(left)* and Colton Johnson, dean of the college at Vassar, are the founders of Exploring Transfer. In 1989, they received the Charles A. Dana Award for Pioneering Achievement in Higher Education for their work with the program. Lieberman is special assistant to the president at CUNY's LaGuardia Community College. She also is the creator of Middle College, an innovative public high school model of collaboration between secondary and higher education housed at LaGuardia.

Julie Yearsley Hungar *(right)* is vice chancellor emeritus of the Seattle Community Colleges. She is founding chair of the Seattle Coalition for Educational Equity, funded by the National Urban Partnership, a project supported by the Ford Foundation.

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